NORMAN LOWE | JOHN TRAYNOR

MASTERING MODERN WORLD HISTORY

— 6TH EDITION —

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Mastering
Modern World History

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Modern World History

Sixth edition

Norman Lowe and John Traynor

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For Norman Lowe 1938–2020

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Preface to the sixth edition

I was very honoured to be asked by Norman Lowe and our publishers at Bloomsbury to be asked to write the new edition of *Mastering Modern World History.* Sadly, Norman did not live to see the outcome of this work and I dedicate this edition to his memory. Norman's work was much loved by students across the globe and his ability to cover such a wide range of material was particularly impressive.

Norman had his own very distinctive style and I have not attempted to replicate it. Since the last edition was published in 2013, there has been a wealth of new material and interpretations across so many of the areas covered in this book. In this edition, students will find new material on The origins of the First World War, the uneasy peace that followed, and the Origins of the Second World War. Around Norman's coverage of the First World War itself, I have offered a brief guide to some of the new perspectives that have emerged over the last decade. I have also included a new chapter on Tsar Nicholas II and the Russian Revolutions of 1917. In addition, this edition includes four chapters on the United States in the Twentieth to Twenty-First Century. Finally, I have made some very minor amendments to Norman's coverage of African History. It is my intention to update further aspects of Norman's work in a seventh edition at some point in the future.

I would like to thank Helen Caunce at Bloomsbury for her help in preparing the new edition. I am also grateful to Martin Griggs for his detailed feedback on my new material. I also need to thank 'The Lakes Boys', former colleagues from Archbishop Blanch school in Liverpool and my old friends from our days together at Sheffield University. As always, my wife Linda has offered tremendous practical support with typing and organization. Hannah, Matty, Patrick and Sarah have kept an eye on me over the last few years! I would not be here at all if it was not for the literally life-saving efforts of Woei Lin Yap, Edward Wood and Neil Oakes. I cannot express my gratitude to them enough.

Finally, I would also like to mention Bob Christie and John Butcher who both passed away during the completion of this book. I miss them both very much.

John Traynor
October 2021

Part

I

War and International Relations

Chapter

1 The origins of the First World War

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Events of the magnitude of the Great War have complex roots and it is difficult to be precise about when the tensions that led to the outbreak of war began. The creation of Germany in 1871 could be seen as marking the start of a gradual escalation of tension which lasted for decades. This was reflected in cultural, economic, military and diplomatic events that culminated in the war of August 1914–November 1918. Germany's energy and ambition may have disrupted the international balance, and the accession to the throne of Emperor Wilhelm II (1888–1918) led to an increased sense of international tension. Of course, all of the major powers contributed to the course of events that were to end in tragedy. While there were also moments of diplomacy and good sense, the period as a whole can be seen as a gradual road to war.

Along this road, the leaders of each of the major powers were prepared to commit to a damaging alliance system, a costly, destabilizing arms race, and a willingness to damage international relationships in order to save face and to appear strong. The process that saw Europe divide itself into two armed camps began in 1882 and was effectively completed by 1907. The 'Naval Race' that saw a focus on massive fleet spending began in 1897 and escalated in the early years of the twentieth century.

While a large part of Europe committed to the arms race and the alliance system, it was the region known as the Balkans which became manifestly unstable. The reason this mattered so much was that on both sides of the alliance system the leaders of Europe's major powers decided that the Balkans was of critical importance to their own international standing. The involvement of Russia on one side of the argument and Austria–Hungary, backed by Germany on the other side had hugely damaging consequences. The sheer scale of the European problem was reflected in the fact that tension also reached new heights, not just in the Balkans but also in Morocco in 1905–6 and in 1911. The outbreak of war in the Balkans in 1912 and again in 1913 showed how dangerous the situation had become. In the early summer of 1914 attention focused on Sarajevo. The fall-out from the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in June led to a Europe-wide 'July Crisis' and the mass declarations of war of August 1914.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The barbarization of warfare spread through Europe like a virus in the late summer of 1914. In an event borne out by Austro-Hungarian documentation, Habsburg soldiers, many of them fresh-faced and away from home for the first time, moved into the town of Sabac on the south bank of the Danube. On 12 August, wary of the light resistance they faced, the soldiers positioned the women of the town directly in front of them, as a human shield. The women were held captive for five days, given only water, while some were beaten and

raped. Before the soldiers moved on up to sixty, perhaps many more, male captives held prisoner in a church were executed in cold blood.

Meanwhile, also in mid-August, in Galicia, Russian General A.A. Brusilov wrote a letter to his wife from the front line describing the horrors of war in vivid detail: 'The entire field of battle, for a distance of almost a hundred versts* was piled high with corpses, and there weren't enough people or stretchers to clear them away … Blood is flowing in endless streams, but there is no other way to fight. The more blood flows the better the results and the sooner the war will end' (Figes, 1996 p.255). In what remains the most reliable account of German atrocities in this conflict, Horne and Kramer describe how, in August 1914, inhabitants of the village of Sourmagne in Belgium were held under armed guard: 'Male victims were selected and shot in a field in front of women and children. The execution squad bayoneted the bodies to ensure that no one survived' (Horne and Kramer, 2001 p.15). The 'old' Europe of the late nineteenth century, at its best, cosmopolitan, relaxed and sophisticated, was about to disappear. It had taken less than a month for the outbreak to spread across an entire continent.

(*100 versts ~ 110 km or 66 miles)

(a) Historiography

More than a century later, the overwhelming human cost of what German historians refer to as the 'Welt Krieg', the world war, remains almost inconceivable. For ten decades, the question of who was responsible for causing the conflict has been the subject of intense debate. In November 1918, the leaders of the Allied Powers were in no doubt. From the perspective of France and Belgium, the trauma of the war, created among many of the victors an overwhelming desire for revenge against Germany. The call to 'Hang the Kaiser' attracted considerable popular support. Yet as the German war effort suddenly collapsed, Wilhelm II abdicated, taking refuge in the Netherlands, where he would live the rest of his life in comfortable exile. In his absence, the Allies were scathing in their verdict: 'The Allied and Associated Powers publicly arraign Wilhelm II of Hohenzollern, former German Emperor, for a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties' (Traynor, 1991 p.19). The assertion that '*the* seminal catastrophe of the Twentieth Century' was simply 'the Kaiser's War' did not last for long (Herwig, 2014 p.3). To be sure, it was clear to his contemporaries and has seldom been disputed by historians that Wilhelm II was a destabilizing influence. His premier biographer John Röhl describes Wilhelm's 'irrational and completely anachronistic rule' indulging in 'ambitious fantasies of world power' (Röhl, 2014 p.127 and p.249). However, a consensus on who actually made the key decisions in German foreign policy at this time has been remarkably illusive. From diplomats in Berlin in 1914, to historians over the next century, it has long been argued that civilian leaders such as Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg or military leaders like General von Moltke actually exerted more influence than their erratic leader. It is also interesting to note that as the war went on the Kaiser became an increasingly 'meaningless figure' (Herwig, 2014 p.428) ignored by his generals.

Before the 1920s had ended, the sentiment that 'No one country and no one man was solely or probably even mainly, to blame' became more widely accepted. The prominent British politician, David Lloyd George commented that 'no one at the head of affairs quite meant war' (Herwig, 2014 p.119). He probably reflected the prevailing mood when he argued that 'Nobody wanted war' but 'nations backed their machines over the precipice' so that effectively the leaders of the Great Powers stumbled into war (Sheffield, 2014 p.23). As James Joll puts it, 'many people in the 1920s blamed the international system, the existence of rival alliances, the armaments race and the evil influence of the old diplomacy' for the outbreak of war (Joll, 2013 p.9).

Around a century later, an influential and – not least in Germany – best-selling interpretation by renowned historian Christopher Clark, entitled *The Sleepwalkers*, argued:

> The outbreak of war in 1914 is not an Agatha Christie drama at the end of which we will discover the culprit standing over a corpse in the conservatory with a smoking pistol. There is no smoking gun in this story; or, rather, there is one in the hands of every major character. Viewed in this light, the outbreak of war was a tragedy, not a crime.
>
> (Clark, 2013 p.1413)

Moreover, 'the protagonists of 1914 were sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world' (Clark, 2013 p.1508). Furthermore, David Stevenson observes that 'historical research into Imperial Germany has not exposed a regime committed, like Hitler's, to premeditated plans for aggression and conquest' (Stevenson, 2012 p.78). An equally interesting perspective is provided by Richard J. Evans, who believes that 'It's time to get away from the blame game.' Evans points out:

> Britain had entered the war allied to the despotic regime of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, while the idea that Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II was some kind of dictatorship does scant justice to the system of checks and balances that characterised the German political system. Millions of the British soldiers who fought in 1914 still didn't have the right to vote. Whatever else it was, it wasn't a war for democracy.
>
> (BBC, 2018 p.14)

The Sleepwalkers premise has not gone unchallenged. Eminent German historian Holger Herwig states that Clark's position is 'untenable' and 'dangerously leads us back' to the stance taken by Lloyd George. Herwig claims that Clark's 'suggestions simply serve to avoid painful self-examination on the part of the "men of 1914"'. As far as Herwig is concerned, 'Nations rarely, if ever, slide or "somnambulate into war. Rather, as in July 1914, statesmen and soldiers assess their situations, weigh their options, calculate the risks involved, and then decide on "war or peace"' (Herwig, 2014 p.25). Jorg Leonhard states that 'They were certainly not sleepwalking' and on the contrary were in 'many respects over-sensitized' (Leonhard, 2018 p.200).

While German responsibility remains central to the debate, the role of Austria–Hungary has also come under close scrutiny. British historian Gary Sheffield emphatically takes Herwig's side claiming that 'To take the "stumbling" view is to ignore fifty years of research. Herwig is right. The evidence is compelling that Germany and Austria-Hungary bear the primary responsibility for beginning the war' (Sheffield, 2014 p.30). He continues: 'Some writers have portrayed imperial Germany as a near-liberal democracy. This is unconvincing. Whatever the theory, real power lay in the hands of the Kaiser and his advisers. Equally unconvincing is the notion that European leaders "sleepwalked" into war in 1914. The evidence is clear: Germany and its ally Austria-Hungary were primarily responsible for initiating conflict' (BBC, 2018 p.12). In his award-winning study 'Ring of Steel' (2014), Alexander Watson argues that 'Austria-Hungary's leaders were exceptional, for they alone actively planned from early July 1914 to take their country to war. The conflict that they wanted in the aftermath of the Sarajevo assassinations was a Balkan rather than a world war, and they went about provoking it with startlingly single-minded determination' (Watson, 2014 p.8). Watson continues, 'The most disconcerting characteristic of Habsburg leaders' decision-making process is the ease with which they contemplated war' (Watson, 2014, p.11). David Stevenson offers further weight to this view claiming that it was, 'the Habsburg monarchy's response to Sarajevo that caused a crisis'

(Stevenson, 2012 p.60). We will examine the fateful decisions which led to war later in this chapter but first we need to consider the relative importance of some of the longer-term 'big causes' of tension that existed in Europe long before the crisis of July 1914.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC RIVALRY

Did the surging economic prowess of many of the great powers in the later nineteenth century place these countries on a collision course that eventually spilled over from the means of production to the battlefield? In the light of what was to come, the words of the British imperialist Leo Amery seem both prophetic and chilling: 'The successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial base. Those people who have the industrial power and the power of invention and science will be able to defeat all others' (Kennedy, 1988 p.196). Perhaps a deadly combination of nationalist pride, rising populations and increasingly intense economic competition pushed the Powers towards the brink.

At first glance, British economic pre-eminence had appeared immutable. 'The first industrial nation' had used the nineteenth century to forge ahead in terms of traditional industries such as coal, iron and textiles. By the start of the twentieth century, Great Britain had developed the largest empire in world history, with an incredible 12 million square miles of land and close to a quarter of the global population. Vast increases in spending and construction made the Royal Navy the most formidable in the world. Naval bases, maritime infrastructure, financial services, investment banking and insurance made Britain the world's foremost trading nation. As Margaret Macmillan points out in 'The War That Ended Peace' 'in 1897, as it celebrated sixty years of Queen Victoria's reign, Britain had never appeared so powerful' (Macmillan, 2014 p.25). It is clear that Britain fully expected this economic pre-eminence to be maintained and was fully prepared to enter a dangerous arms race when that came under threat.

The emergence of the united nation of Germany in 1871 meant that the economic landscape was rapidly changing. The new, ambitious nation which emerged from a resounding military victory over France in 1871 quickly earned a well-deserved reputation as a dynamic, resource-rich and well-educated society. Yet it was precisely these qualities and Germany's capacity for rapid growth and improvement which caused her rivals to fear and resent her. It may be that the origins of the war can be dated back to this fundamental change in the European balance of power. The deep enmity between Germany and her near neighbour France was sealed by the war of 1870–1 and the French desire for *revanche* or revenge would be sustained for decades. It is worth noting that France's economic recovery in the final decades of the nineteenth century was particularly impressive. France also enjoyed many advantages. With only one obvious enemy, Germany, it could rest all of its resources and calculations on the sole task of revenge. Developments in its banking and financial services, very healthy levels of foreign lending and investments in iron, steel, engineering, motor vehicles and aviation, suggest a nation at the top of its game. A more sober picture emerges when one is reminded that the gap between France and Germany in terms of manufacturing share and GNP was significantly to Germany's advantage. Perhaps the starkest indication of the yawning gulf between these two rivals was that while the French population increased by only just over 1 million between 1890 and 1914 the German population had grown by almost 18 million in the same period (Kennedy, 1988 p.223).

The rapid growth of the German and the American economy meant that British pre-eminence both in Europe and globally was significantly undermined. As Kennedy puts it:

> Whereas in 1880 the United Kingdom still contained 22.9 per cent of world manufacturing output, that figure had shrunk to 13.6 per cent by 1913; and while its share of world trade was 23.2 per cent in 1880, it was only 14.1 per cent in 1911–1913. In

terms of industrial muscle, both the United States and Imperial Germany had moved ahead. The "workshop of the world" was now in third place, not because it wasn't growing, but because others were growing faster.

(Kennedy, 1988 p.228)

From the perspective of eastern Europe things looked very different. The sheer size of the Russian Empire, stretching 6,000 miles from Poland to the Pacific, with a population that had increased from 116.8 million in 1890 to 175.1 million in 1913, was daunting in itself. Its military and naval personnel in 1914 numbered 1,352,000, completely outstripping all of the other European powers. Yet its modest level of urban population and modernization places it much lower in the list of relative power. Low energy consumption and high levels of illiteracy show that Russia was a complex mix of strength and weakness. Finally, in an even broader perspective, Stig Förster claims that

most of the ingredients that gave World War 1 its catastrophic character had emerged long before 1914. These included industrialized mass society, nationalism, chauvinism and racism, the participation of the masses in politics, mass armies equipped and provisioned with modern weapons, industrialized economies that provided the means for large-scale destruction, and the erosion of distinctions between soldiers and civilians. It took only a long, stalemated war among the major powers to bring these ingredients together.

(Chickering and Förster, 2000 p.4)

It is easy to see why some historians have claimed that the Anglo-German economic rivalry was an important long-term cause of the First World War. With the economic league table changing so quickly the importance of making strategic alliances became more critical than ever before. For Germany, friendship with France was out of the question. Britain was already regarding Germany as a rival rather than an ally. This meant that German relations with Austria–Hungary and Russia would be of the utmost importance. These shifting alliances could be seen as a further long-term cause of the conflict to come.

1.3 THE ALLIANCE SYSTEM

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the first decade of the twentieth century, many of the European powers committed themselves to military alliances. How important a factor in causing the war was this abstract system that seemed to be beyond the control of any individual nation? Put simply, was it the alliance system rather than individual nations that caused the war? From the German perspective, it was perhaps understandable that France's alliance with Russia, increasingly supported by Great Britain, could be interpreted as a malign policy intended to encircle their country. From the British viewpoint, Germany's rapid industrial growth, prolific naval expansion and frequently clumsy or even aggressive diplomacy created anxiety and the need for a defensive alliance.

For many decades, the alliance system in itself, which effectively split the continent into two unfriendly camps, was widely seen as having a damaging impact on the general pre-war climate. Its existence, it was frequently claimed, created Europe-wide tensions and power blocs taking away flexibility from all involved. However, some important recent work has claimed that the alliance system itself has been used as an excuse for individual countries to shelter behind and diminish their own responsibility. In his definitive recent study of the July Crisis, T.G. Otte questions the long-standing assumption that the alliance system was effectively 'the straitjacket of a near-rigid system of power blocs', suggesting that the individual leaders retained considerable freedom of choice and room

for manoeuvre (Otte, 2014 p.444). Otte's standpoint finds support in Annika Mombauer's excellent synthesis, 'The origins of the First World War: Controversies and Consensus'. She favourably cites the work of James Retallack who 'dismisses views which rely on alliance "mechanisms" and Germany's "exposed geographic position" to explain the origins of war'. Retallack states that 'Such analyses seek to shift the blame elsewhere: either toward the other Great Powers or toward the abstracted international system' (Mombauer, 2013 p.181). While the importance of the alliance system may have been reduced it is nevertheless important to highlight the key moments in its development.

(a) 1882 The Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy)

The German-Austrian treaty was signed in 1879 creating a powerful, historic link of the most fundamental importance. From this moment Germany had attached its foreign policy to its near neighbour even though Austria's ranking as a great power seemed increasingly questionable. This was a commitment which would lead directly to the Balkans which, as fate would have it, would become Europe's most volatile region. The key question would be whether Germany could link itself so closely to Austria–Hungary without alienating Russia. Germany's commitment to the increasingly vulnerable and multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire would be a hugely important factor in the drift to war. Italy joined the German-Austrian alliance in 1882 and this was known as the Triple Alliance. This was formally renewed in 1907 and 1912. While the alliance system is often seen as a highly damaging element in the outbreak of the First World War, it should be pointed out that these commitments were not enough to compel Italy to join in with Germany and Austria–Hungary when war broke out in August 1914.

(b) 1893 The Franco-Russian alliance

In 1890 Germany allowed the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia to lapse. While Kaiser Wilhelm II's regime was still in its infancy, and with the new leader playing a largely passive role, another decision of the greatest importance had been made. In the words of Gordon Craig, 'One can argue plausibly that the first foreign political action taken in … the Wilhelmine new course was the most crucial of all those made between 1890 and the outbreak of the First World War and that it set in train the whole chain of calamity that led toward that catastrophe' (Craig, 1981 p.230).

Russia now moved away from Germany's orbit and straight towards France. In 1891, partly in response, came the Franco-Russian Entente, in which the signatories agreed to consult each other in the event of threats of aggression to one of the powers. In 1892 the countries signed the Franco-Russian Military Convention and then the full-blown Alliance of 1893. These alliances were made even more significant by the degree of economic cooperation which now flowed between Paris and Moscow. Although war was by no means on the horizon, the lines of the alliance system that would prevail in 1914 had been put firmly in place.

(c) 1902 The Anglo-Japanese alliance

Britain moved to strengthen its position in the Far East by signing a defensive alliance with Japan, a nation that was becoming steadily more powerful both militarily and economically.

(d) 1904 The Entente Cordiale (Great Britain and France)

Less formal than a full-scale alliance, the Entente was intended to resolve earlier colonial disputes, particularly in Egypt and West Africa. If Russia and France were already bound together, then the addition of Great Britain to this system was certain to cause alarm from the perspective of Berlin. In October 1904, the Dogger Bank incident saw Britain's relations with Russia badly strained following the sinking of a British trawler by the Russian Baltic fleet. Germany tried to capitalize on the debacle by negotiating with Russia but this came to nothing. Germany reacted to these developments with dismay. The formidable colonial disputes that had hindered Anglo-French relations in the 1890s had been put to one side. It seemed that Germany's sense of isolation or encirclement could only become more intense. It is also worth noting that, as John Röhl explains in his massive biography of Wilhelm II, new research indicates the real possibility that

> the political and military leadership of the Kaiserreich in 1904–5 deliberately set out to use the opportunity offered by Russia's defeats and revolutionary unrest to bring about a so-called 'preventive war' against France … it is an incontrovertible fact that from the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904 the preventive war question was constantly discussed, and at the highest levels, in Berlin.
>
> (Röhl, 2014 p.323)

(e) 1907 The Anglo-Russian entente

By now the alliance system had become a central plank of European diplomacy. In the same year that the Triple Alliance was renewed for six years, Britain and Russia moved much closer together. Potential disagreements over Afghanistan, the Bosphorus, Tibet and Persia were resolved. Europe was now effectively divided into two major alliance systems. The decision of 1890 to allow the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia to lapse now looked disastrous. The key European leaders had moved the pieces on the board until two competing alliances now stared each other in the eye. To make matters worse the bonds of the geopolitical system were increasingly intertwined with the emerging hot-spot of European politics – the Balkans and with the imminent disintegration of large parts of the neighbouring Ottoman Empire. If the alliance system itself was damaging, then the capacity of each side to wage war by engaging in an arms race surely only added to the sense of a European crisis.

1.4 THE ARMS RACE

As the exuberant leader of the new power, the 'fleet Kaiser', Wilhelm II, made no secret of his personal fascination with naval matters. 'The Supreme Warlord' had a strong desire to enhance Germany's naval prowess to better support its well-established land army. In 1888, when Wilhelm II came to the throne, the German army comprised 19,294 officers and 468,409 non-commissioned officers and men in peacetime, compared to a naval strength of only 15,480 men and a modest fleet of only 18 armour-clads, 8 large and 10 small cruising vessels. By 1913, the navy comprised 2,196 officers and almost 60,000 non-commissioned officers and men. The navy regulations of 1912 stated that the fleet would comprise of 61 capital ships, 40 small cruisers, 144 torpedo boats and 72 submarines.

Map 1.1 **Europe in 1914**

Under the energetic leadership of Grand Admiral Tirpitz, 'the motor force behind the audacious naval armaments programme' (Lerman, 2003 p.237), the Navy became central to German foreign policy. Röhl's analysis is that

> The 'Napoleonic supremacy' which the Kaiser, the Chancellor, the Foreign office, the naval authorities and the army had striven to establish since 1897 at the latest, was unmistakeably aimed against the existing European balance of power which in the end was upheld by Great Britain. Germany's world policy therefore clearly carried the risk of a world war from the very outset.
>
> (Röhl, 2014 p.382)

Fritz Fischer underlines the importance of the navy to the realization of Germany's strategic objectives: 'The slogans which William proclaimed vociferously and which Bulow adopted without resistance … were world policy as a task, world power as the aim and naval construction as the instrument' (Koch, 1984 p.128). Britain's willingness to respond with its own massive naval spending programme effectively placed these two powerful nations on a collision course. A further crucial factor in this area was that the Hohenzollern leaders became increasingly convinced that Russia's rearmament programme would be complete by 1916, posing an existential threat to Germany. We have established then that economic rivalry, an increasingly rigid alliance system and the naval race all added to the sense of tension in the European political climate. The significance of these underlying problems was exacerbated by certain tension points in Europe that increased the likelihood of a major conflict.

1.5 EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

(a) The Moroccan crisis (1905–6)

The implications of the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale of 1904 were immediately felt in Berlin. Wary of a change in the European balance of power, Chancellor Bulow quickly sought to respond, by precipitating a crisis in Morocco, either as a pretext for a preventative war against France, or at least to put the fledgling Anglo-French alliance to the test. Germany calculated that Morocco was a vulnerable area for France. This was not because Morocco itself held any real significance to the decision makers in Berlin but rather because of the threat posed by France's friendship with Britain.

In February 1905 France demanded new concessions from the Sultan over Morocco. Grasping the opportunity to harass the French, Bulow, supported by Holstein in the Foreign Office, decided to stage an elaborate show of German influence, persuading an initially reluctant Kaiser to stage a high-profile visit to Tangier during his already-planned spring cruise in the Mediterranean. As Röhl explains, this provocative action 'caused a serious political crisis that brought Europe to the edge of a major war' (Röhl, 2014 p.329). In March, Wilhelm II landed at Tangiers where he was received by the Sultan's uncle. In a three-hour meeting the Kaiser made it plain that Germany regarded Morocco as an independent state and expected her to stand up to the French.

Germany maintained its aggressive stance, with Bulow insisting that an international conference on the future of Morocco was necessary. When Bulow went so far as to hint that Germany would resort to war, the French Foreign Minister resigned. Briefly, this appeared to be a triumph for German aggression, but when the conference Germany had demanded took place at Algeciras in January 1906, her isolation over Morocco became clear. While the crisis petered out, the conference had enabled Great Britain and France to come together for military talks. If Germany's aim had been to drive a wedge between

Britain and France, the outcome was the opposite. As Isobel Hull puts it: 'The Moroccan Crisis which Germany had engineered in order to break up the newly formed entente cordiale, ended in a chilling demonstration of Germany's diplomatic isolation' (Traynor, 1991, p.84). When historians draw attention to Germany's maladroit diplomacy this would surely be a prime example. As Paul Kennedy explains, 'because Germany did not enjoy, say, Japan's geographical position, its statecraft had to be of an extraordinarily high order'. In fact, says Kennedy, the 'greatest failure of all' was that 'the decision-making process in Berlin concealed, behind a façade of high imperial purpose, a chaos and instability which amazed all who witnessed it' (Kennedy, 1988 p.213).

(b) The Balkans

If the general mood across Europe was one of tension and distrust then nowhere was this more intense than in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Having witnessed the rapid disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and mounting clamour for Slav independence, the Austrians were increasingly on the defensive, particularly in the Balkans, a region in an inflamed state as the new century began. With the authority of the Turkish Empire in decline, the independent Balkan states seemed increasingly volatile. Above all, Austria regarded Serbia as the driving force behind Slav nationalism. In Berlin, Germany's decision makers saw that the fate of their closest ally was inextricably linked with their own future. Meanwhile, Russia's apparent sponsorship of Slav nationalism, through their Pan-Slav policy seemed to place her on a collision course with Austria. Germany's decision makers had placed their country in a situation where friendship with Austria–Hungary was completely incompatible with sustaining a relationship with Russia.

By 1903 Serbia had emerged as a key player in the Balkans. The upsurge in Serbian patriotism was fuelled by the brutal murder of King Alexander Obrenovich of Serbia in 1903. This dynasty, which had established relatively positive relations with Austria was now replaced by the Karageorgevich family, which had historic ties to Russia. From now on, Russian influence, fanned by a fervent Pan-Slavic ideology grew in Belgrade and ultra-nationalist, Serbian patriotic societies were established in Bosnia and Hungary. Despite this, the period 1904–7 came to mark the high point of Austro–Russian relations. While Austria focused on pressing domestic matters, Russia was preoccupied with the Far East and its humiliating military defeat by Japan in 1904–5.

(c) The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1908)

By 1907 Europe's stark division into two armed blocs, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente was clear for all to see. Russia had gradually switched its attention from the Far East towards Europe and the Balkans became increasingly volatile. The territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina had been effectively administered by Austria since 1878 but remained under formal Ottoman sovereignty until 1908. Austria believed that strong action in defence of her empire could not be delayed any longer. The crucial decision to take decisive action against Bosnia-Herzegovina through its formal annexation can be located in Vienna rather than Berlin and in particular, seems to have been the initiative of the Austrian Foreign Minister, Aehrenthal. From Berlin's perspective there seemed little choice other than to back Austria, even though this would do untold damage to Germany's relationship with Russia. As Bulow put it, 'our position would be dangerous if Austria lost confidence in us and turned away … in the present world constellation we must be careful to retain in Austria a "true partner"' (Traynor, 1991, p.29). It is clear to see that part of the German calculation was that Russia remained weak after the recent military

Map 1.2 **Peoples of the Habsburg Empire**

defeat by Japan and the Revolution of 1905. With this in mind Austria–Hungary was fully prepared to breach international law and take international relations into an unchartered, more dangerous place.

Russia and Serbia expressed their indignation over the annexation but in the spring of 1909 Germany raised the temperature by suggesting to Russia that they should formally acknowledge the annexation. When Russia hesitated, Germany reinforced their message in terms so strong as to almost suggest an ultimatum. Russia was in no position to go to war over Bosnia and was left with no choice but to acknowledge the annexation. Germany's willingness to humiliate Russia would not be forgotten and also had the unintended impact of pushing her firmly in the direction of two willing partners, Great Britain and France. The events of 1908–9 had virtually created the landscape that would be in place when war came five years later. As Austrian historian Manfried Rauchensteiner observes in his massive history of *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy*:

> The foundations for war were laid primarily in the Balkans … At the end of the annexation crisis, it was evident that several patterns for action had evolved in 1908/1909 that would serve as a model time and again in later years. The Habsburg Monarchy had been given rear support by the German Empire. The Chancellor of the German Empire, Bernhard von Bulow, had clearly stated to Austria-Hungary … that the German Empire would share responsibility for any decision taken and would also offer military assistance if necessary.
>
> (Rauchensteiner, 2014 p.21)

(d) The second Moroccan crisis – 1911

Remarkably, given the catastrophic diplomatic failure in Morocco of 1905–6, Germany's decision makers took the decision to exert pressure against France in exactly the same place only five years after the previous debacle. Once again, any leadership or initiative from the Kaiser is difficult to locate. On this occasion, Kiderlen-Wachter, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, claimed that by sending troops to Morocco in April 1911, France was in breach of the 1906 agreement. It was Kiderlen who provided the stimulus to this crisis and largely his decision that Germany despatch the gunboat, *Panther* to the Moroccan port of Agadir. However, Röhl's exceptional biography makes clear that at this moment of crisis the Kaiser's enthusiasm for the naval programme remained unabated: That was 'the only thing that will put us on equal terms with them [the British]', he declared at the height of the Agadir crisis. 'Only by means of an even stronger fleet could the British be brought to reason.' It became crystal clear to Germany's rivals that the objective of gunboat exercise was to divide Britain from France. Instead, the opposite was achieved. As Lloyd George made clear in his speech in July 1911 to London's financial elites at the Mansion House:

> If a situation were to be forced upon us, in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of Nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure.
>
> (Traynor, 1991 p.49)

Germany had seldom looked more isolated.

(e) The Potsdam War Council – 1912

There can be no doubt that German policy makers ended 1911 with a sense of isolation and unease. Their handling of the Moroccan crisis of that year had been clumsy at best, while the escalating conflict in the Balkans caused concern about the future of Germany's closest rival, Austria–Hungary. Relations with France and Russia remained poor, while the naval race had driven a wedge to any improvement in relations with Britain. The argument used by some German generals was that Germany was being systematically isolated.

The feeling that events were closing in was compounded by the shattering domestic events of 1912. The Reichstag elections of that year saw the emergence of the Social Democrats as the single largest party in the Reichstag. From the perspective of the right this was an alarming development only fuelling the sense that events both at home and abroad were closing in on the ruling circle. More recent research suggests that Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg may have calculated that the success of the left in the 'red election' may have handed him a weapon in his ongoing dispute with members of the Conservative Party. Whether the ruling elite were being driven towards a high-risk foreign policy by the sense of domestic crisis remains an open question.

In terms of historiography, the most important work in this area was carried out by the German scholar Fritz Fischer in the 1960s. He cited a 'War Council' which took place in Potsdam in December 1912 as a crucial staging post in a planned war. Fischer's research led him to claim that the 'War Council' was a pivotal moment in a planned war. Against the gathering storm clouds the Kaiser and his military commanders convened an extraordinary meeting at Potsdam. Fischer has claimed that at this meeting the Kaiser stated that 'If Russia were to support the Serbs … If Austria were to invade Serbia, war would be inevitable for us … The fleet, of course, would have to face the war against Britain.' Moltke, Chief of the General Staff, is said to have advocated an immediate 'preventative' war against France and Russia with the words, 'In my opinion war is inevitable, and the sooner the better … the popularity of a war against Russia as outlined by the Kaiser, should be better prepared.'

However, the documents unearthed by Fischer also showed that Admiral Tirpitz wanted the 'great struggle' to be postponed for eighteen months, which would allow extra time to widen the strategically crucial Kiel Canal, so that Germany's battleships would have easy access to the North Sea. Historians such as Fischer and Röhl have seen this meeting as a major staging post on the German path to war. It is worth noting that the eighteen-month postponement allowed the work on the Kiel Canal to be completed by the summer of 1914 which coincided exactly with the outbreak of the war in Europe. In the aftermath of the conference, work on a new Army Bill was stepped up and antagonism towards Russia in the popular press seemed to increase. Financial reserves were consolidated and courses at the Prussian military academy were reduced in length, all perhaps indicating that war was looming.

On the other hand, the Chief of the Naval Cabinet, General George Alexander Von Muller concluded that the significance of the Potsdam meeting was 'pretty much nil'. This has led historians such as Wolfgang Mommsen to conclude that the 'war council' made no decisions of any real importance. He believes that naval and military increases had already been discussed. It has also been pointed out that a genuine 'war council' would have called for the attendance of important figures such as Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg who was conspicuously absent from the meeting, leading to claims that Fischer over-stated the significance of the Potsdam War Council.

Fischer's research also uncovered a memorandum drawn up by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in September 1914 which was presented as proof of the expansionist tendencies that circulated through the Kaiser's court and among his belligerent military entourage. Fischer's pioneering work has been summarized by Klaus Epstein as demonstrating that

the ruling circle 'succumbed during the First World War to a collective megalomania which expressed itself in utterly unrealistic war aims and a grotesque inability to see the world as it actually was'. Roger Chickering describes Fischer's work as 'the decisive moment in the recent historiography of the German Empire' because he

> charged not only that the Imperial German government launched the great European war in 1914, but also that Germany's leaders were guided in this decision by ambitions that bore a chilling resemblance to Hitler's hegemonic designs during the Second World War … It became common to portray the history of Imperial Germany as a critical juncture along a *Sonderweg,* a special German path of social and political development.
>
> (Chickering, 1998 p.3)

It was with arguments of this type in mind that in January 2008 the influential German newspaper *Der Spiegel* lamented the fact that 'How it could have come to this, had come to be the central question in German History' (Simms, 2019 p.1822). Finally, we should note how Epstein contends that Fischer 'tends to exaggerate the … continuity and consistency of Germany's drive for world power', and misunderstands the complex figure of the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg. Perhaps the ultimate riddle with this man was that he seemed both to desire and to abhor war.

(f) The First Balkan War – 1912

By 1911, the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was becoming clear. Italy's seizure of Libya was based on this calculation. The Balkan League was formed the following year and comprised Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro. In the First Balkan War these states combined to attack Turkey and drove her out of all her European territories. This decisive victory generated an acute sense of crisis in Austria but on this occasion decisive action against Serbia was not forthcoming. Germany's stance was to advise Austria to wait for the Balkan League to break up before taking any military action against Serbia.

(g) The Second Balkan War – 1913

Within a year of their spectacular triumph disputes within the Balkan League led to a further war in the region, this time between Bulgaria and her former allies. Not surprisingly, Bulgaria was quickly defeated. Although on this occasion Serbia responded to an Austrian ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of Serb troops from Albania, the fact remained that the Balkan states were steadily growing in strength. Serbia had doubled its territory and seen a population increase from 2.9 million to 4.4 million. As Gary Sheffield puts it, 'The Austrians could not but be alarmed at "this new Serbia, this large, aggressive and antagonistic South Slavic state on their Balkan frontier," which still aspired to bring the Serbs in the Habsburg Empire within its borders' (Sheffield, 2014 p.26). With these developments in mind some commentators have described the outbreak of war in 1914 as 'The Third Balkan War'.

(h) The July Crisis – 1914

Despite the wars of 1911–13, 1914 initially seemed likely to many observers to be an unremarkable and peaceful year. The British diplomat Arthur Nicolson noted in May 1914

that 'since I have been at the Foreign Office I have not seen such calm waters' (Clark, 2013 p.812). After six relatively trouble-free months in international affairs, the event which precipitated the July Crisis actually took place at the end of June 1914. On Sunday 28 June, Archduke Franz Ferdinand – heir to the throne of Austria–Hungary and the future ruler of around 45 million people in central and south-eastern Europe – had taken his wife, Countess Sophie, on a state visit to Sarajevo. It was their wedding anniversary and there were many people among the large crowds who came to see them who appeared to wish them well. However, Sarajevo was the capital of the former Turkish province of Bosnia, a state inhabited by Slavs but occupied since 1908 by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

A southern Slav terrorist organization comprised of ultra-nationalist army officers and student radicals and calling itself the 'Black Hand' gang regarded the Austrian prince as the figurehead of an occupying empire which stood in the way of Serb independence. Ironically, Franz Ferdinand had actually personally opposed the annexation on the grounds that it was an unnecessary provocation of the south Slavs. Among the ranks of the terrorist group was Gavrillo Prinzip, who, beyond the direct control of the Serbian government, had decided to carry out an assassination attempt on the archduke. Prinzip was able to breach with some ease what by today's standards was shoddy personal security. Just before 11.30 am Prinzip found himself just eight feet away from his target. When the chauffeur stalled the car attempting to find reverse gear the assassin was able to carry out his attack with brutal efficiency. Within moments Franz Ferdinand and his wife Countess Sophie were dead. Christopher Clark has called the crisis following the assassination 'the most complex event of modern times'. He refers to the 'raw modernity' of the July Crisis which 'began with a squad of suicide bombers and a cavalcade of automobiles. Behind the outrage at Sarajevo was an avowedly terrorist organisation with a cult of sacrifice, death and revenge' (Clark, 2013 p.33).

Meanwhile, beyond the detailed narrative of the day's events in Sarajevo, in *Towards the Flame* eminent historian of Russia, Dominic Lieven suggests a new perspective is called for:

> Contrary to the near-universal assumption in the English-speaking world, the war was first and foremost an eastern European conflict. Its immediate origins lay in the murder of the Austrian heir at Sarajevo in south-eastern Europe. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, led to a confrontation between Austria and Russia, eastern Europe's two great empires … The great irony of the First World War was that a conflict which began more than anything else as a struggle between the Germanic powers and Russia to dominate east-central Europe ended in the defeat of both sides.
>
> (Lieven, 1983 p.18)

1.6 THE ROLE OF CHANCELLOR BETHMANN-HOLLWEG IN THE JULY CRISIS

While the Kaiser's impulsive personality has been well-documented the role of his more reserved Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg remains of great interest. A traditional perspective has depicted the Chancellor as a moderate figure, 'the philosopher in the chancellor's chair' (Jarausch, 1972 p.5), trying valiantly to keep hot-headed, aggressive generals in their place but slowly losing control as the July Crisis heated up. However, Fritz Fischer's important work documented a radically different picture. Fischer located the Chancellor much closer to military extremists such as General Ludendorff. He claimed that Bethmann-Hollweg had ambitious war aims in line with some leading German industrialists and with the radical lobbying of the Pan-German League. Furthermore, Fischer

highlighted a memorandum of 9 September 1914 in which the Chancellor stated that the aim of the war must be the security of the German Empire in the West and in the East for the foreseeable future. France would be permanently weakened and Russia pushed back as far as possible from the German frontier, and her rule over non-Russian subject peoples broken. Crucially, Fischer believed the scale of the September memorandum meant that it must have been planned prior to the outbreak of war. Fischer showed close personal contact between the Chancellor and Walter Rathenau, director of the powerful German electrical combine, AEG.

Eminent historian, Roger Chickering provides this analysis:

> At the center of the dispute stands the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, the civilian head of the German federal government. Some historians, with Fritz Fischer in the lead, have argued that Bethmann seized upon the assassination as the pretext to launch a long-planned war of aggression, whose goal was German hegemony on the European continent. The preponderance of evidence, however, now suggests instead that the chancellor pursued a more cautious policy, which grew out of his anxiety over the future of the Austrian monarchy, whose survival, he believed, did justify the risk of a European war. Bethmann was strengthened in this belief by the country's leading soldier, the chief of the army's General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke …
>
> The thinking of both Bethmann and Molke betrayed as well the malaise that was rife among Germany's political and social elites over the country's domestic future-particularly over the dramatic growth of the world's most formidable Socialist party.
>
> (Chickering, 1998 p.10–12)

Bethmann-Hollweg's biographer paints a picture of a gloomy, pessimistic man, full of self-doubt and apprehension. Overlooking the park of his estate near Berlin, he told his son that there would be no point in planting new trees as the Russians would be there soon. A memorandum from the military dated May 1914 adds to the sense of pessimism: 'At the moment Italy is still on the side of the Triple Alliance and Emperor Franz Joseph's personality still holds the hotch-potch Danubian monarch together … But for how long? Will these things perhaps not change in favour (of the Entente Powers) quite soon?' (Traynor, 1991 p.94).

(a) The Austrian ultimatum

In Vienna, Conrad, the belligerent Chief of the Austrian General Staff, quickly convinced himself that the assassin was a 'Bosnian of Serbian nationality', that the murder could not have been 'the deed of a single fanatic' and that it was surely 'the work of a well-organised conspiracy' which amounted to 'the declaration of war by Serbia on Austria-Hungary', which, 'could only be answered by war' (McMeekin, 2013 p.55). Within days, his colleague, Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister warned Emperor Franz Joseph that if the act of terrorism went unpunished, then 'our southern and eastern neighbours would be so certain of our powerlessness that they would consequently bring their work of destruction [of the empire] to its conclusion' (McMeekin, 2013 p.69).

In contrast, when the Kaiser first heard the news of the murder he exercised restraint. However, his response to an official report on the assassination from the German ambassador in Vienna received in early July shows him becoming more agitated and is now used as evidence against him. His vitriolic comments in the margins of the document are of themselves striking. 'Now or never', he exclaimed, 'The Serbs will have to be

straightened out and soon.' The key question was whether action against Serbia could be carried out without Russian intervention. In Austria, Emperor Franz Joseph also appeared calm and it was left to Conrad, to propose immediate action. When Berchtold expressed concern that Germany 'would leave us in the lurch' the Habsburgs decided to ask for clarification from the Kaiser himself. At a crucial meeting at the Royal Palace it turned out that absolute clarification was indeed forthcoming. The Austrian envoy noted that 'the Kaiser authorised me to inform our gracious Majesty that we might in this case, as in all others, rely on Germany's full support … especially as far as our action against Serbia was concerned'. Such was the wholehearted nature of the support on offer, that this has become known as the 'blank cheque' (Traynor, 1991 p.33–34). The military hot-heads in both capitals could hardly have been more satisfied. Rauchensteiner's verdict is scathing: 'actions long-deliberated over were put to the test … long-prepared decisions were taken. The war was precipitated. Not only that: it was deliberately unleashed. And it was Austria-Hungary that loosened the fetters. The German Empire offered a guiding hand whenever Austria-Hungary lost its nerve' (Rauchensteiner, 2014 p.90).

It now fell to the Austrians to draw up a definitive memorandum to Serbia. As the Kaiser explained to his officials, 'the Austrian Government will demand the most far-reaching satisfaction from Serbia and will, as soon as this is not given, move its troops into Serbia' (Traynor, 1991 p.35). After weeks of delay, and an almost ludicrous quest for literary perfection, the much re-drafted ultimatum was finally handed to Serbia on 23 July. Its harsh terms and 48-hour time limit for a reply sent shock waves throughout Europe, not least in Britain, where the foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, described the ultimatum as 'the most formidable document I had ever seen addressed by one State to another that was independent'. While Serbia drafted a careful, and in tone at least, conciliatory reply, it was never going to be enough to satisfy Austria. When Austria quickly announced that it had broken off relations with Serbia, the real intentions behind the façade of the ultimatum were clear for all to see.

The civilian leader, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was astute enough to anticipate the likely train of events. It was surely clear to him at this moment that Russia would now stand fully behind Serbia. On 7 July he confided to a close aide, 'An action against Serbia can lead to world war'. A week later he admitted that he was taking a 'leap into the dark' but this was his 'gravest duty'. To make matters worse, 'Secret intelligence gives a shattering picture … the military might of Russia is growing fast.' Crucially, towards the end of July, and with the generals clamouring to put their long-standing plans to the test, Bethmann shifted his priorities when he informed the Kaiser that 'in all events Russia must ruthlessly be put in the wrong'. Events had acquired their own terrible momentum and now played out on a Europe-wide scale. On 28 July Austria–Hungary declared war on Serbia and actually shelled the capital city, Belgrade. Although the crucial step of general mobilization against Russia had not yet taken place, Tsar Nicholas II had already felt compelled to sign two alternative decrees one for partial mobilization and one for general mobilization. Although the Kaiser and the Tsar exchanged conciliatory notes, events were moving with such pace and complexity that no individual exercised sufficient control to alter the final outcome. The noted Italian historian Luigi Albertini in studying the leaders involved in the July Crisis observed that 'the disproportion between their intellectual and moral endowments and the gravity of the problems which faced them' (Traynor 1991 p. 36–7). Jorg Leonhard terms the July Crisis 'a textbook example of a crisis of trust' (Leonhard, 2018 p.212).

In the final week of July, Foreign Secretary Grey urged all sides to show restraint. The Kaiser expressed some satisfaction with Serbia's reply to the ultimatum but nevertheless recommended that Austria should occupy Belgrade and remain there to guarantee Serbia's compliance. Yet while Austria's civilian leadership tried to consider the Kaiser's 'halt in Belgrade' proposal, the military in Vienna and Berlin were making it plain that further

delay could have disastrous strategic consequences. Austria eventually made plain that it was too late to delay operations against Serbia. It is clear that in the final days of the July Crisis it was the military rather than civilian advisers who carried most weight. On 30 July, Austria–Hungary ordered general mobilization for the next day. Russia immediately followed suit. By noon on 31 July news of Russia's general mobilization had reached Berlin. This had the effect of bringing the civilian and military factions together in each of the capitals. Inflammatory coverage in the German press claimed that Russian patrols had actually made incursions onto German territory. On 1 August Germany declared war on Russia and mobilized her troops. Two days later the logic of the alliance system led Germany to also declare war on France.

A final, crucial dimension came with the nature of Germany's military strategy. Based on long-standing plans drawn up as early as 1904 and perfected in the winter of 1905, by General Schlieffen, Germany's hope was that Britain would remain neutral. In the belief that it would take several weeks before the Russian mobilization would be fully felt, Germany's soldiers would outflank the French army by marching through the neutral country of Belgium. This was known by all to be in direct violation of the Treaty of London, a 'piece of paper', which set out Britain's guarantees to Belgium but dated back to 1839. Germany steadfastly hoped that national self-interest would mean that Britain would stand by while Belgian neutrality was violated. Some historians have claimed that British statesmen should have been more explicit in making clear that this would not be the case. When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August the German leadership reacted with shock and dismay. By now it was too late. The chain was complete. With the exception of Italy, the alliances set out years earlier held firm. Europe was at war. In Austria–Hungary, the declarations of war and orders for troop mobilizations were signed with an ostrich feather quill pen. Wilhelm II's table, upon which he signed documents that would lead Europe into the abyss, was made from wood from Nelson's flagship *Victory*. These were symbols of an age that was about to disappear.

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Chapter

2 The First World War 1914–1918

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The two opposing sides in the war were:

The Allies or Entente Powers:	Britain and her empire (including troops from Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand) France Russia (left December 1917) Italy (entered May 1915) Serbia Belgium Romania (entered August 1916) United States (entered April 1917) Japan
The Central Powers:	Germany Austria–Hungary Turkey (entered November 1914) Bulgaria (entered October 1915)

The war turned out to be quite different from what most people had anticipated. It was widely expected to be a short, decisive affair, like other recent European wars – all over by Christmas 1914. This is why Moltke was so worried about being left at the post when it came to mobilization. However, the Germans failed to achieve the rapid defeat of France: although they penetrated deeply, Paris did not fall, and *stalemate quickly developed on the Western Front*, with all hope of a short war gone. Both sides dug themselves in and spent the next four years attacking and defending lines of trenches.

In eastern Europe there was more movement, with early Russian successes against the Austrians, who constantly had to be helped out by the Germans. This caused friction between Austrians and Germans. But by December 1917 the Germans had captured Poland (Russian territory) and forced the Russians out of the war. Britain, suffering heavy losses of merchant ships through submarine attacks, and France, whose armies were paralysed by mutiny, seemed on the verge of defeat. Gradually, however, the tide turned; the Allies, helped by the entry of the United States in April 1917, wore down the Germans, whose last despairing attempt at a decisive breakthrough in France failed in the spring of 1918. The success of the British navy in blockading German ports and defeating the submarine threat by defending convoys of merchant ships was also telling on the Germans. By late summer 1918 they were nearing exhaustion. *An armistice (ceasefire) was signed on 11*

November 1918, though Germany itself had hardly been invaded. A controversial peace settlement was signed at Versailles the following year.

2.1 HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE NATURE OF THE GREAT WAR

The first section of this chapter considers some of the key developments in the historiography of the Great War. It is followed by detailed coverage of the war itself and concludes with a look at recent comments on the consequences of the war.

(a) A global conflict

In November 2018, the renowned filmmaker Peter Jackson released *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Faded archive footage of the Western Front was digitally transformed to show with stunning clarity the fresh faces of the mainly young soldiers in the trench systems of northern France and Belgium. From a British perspective, the Western Front has remained central to our understanding of the war itself and has also dominated the historiography. But an important recent shift has seen a broader view of the conflict emerge, revealing a war 'that was fought in the west and east, in the south – on the border between Italy and Austria-Hungary and in the Balkans – and on the adjacent seas. It was also fought in the Middle East, Africa and the Far East, as well as on the oceans of the world. Every continent was affected' (Chickering and Förster, 2000 p.9).

Recent work by Eugene Rogan makes the scale of the conflict crystal clear:

> More than any other event, the Ottoman entry into the war turned Europe's conflict into a world war. As opposed to the minor skirmishes in the Far East and East Africa, major battles were fought over the full four years of the war in the Middle East. Moreover, the Middle Eastern battlefields were often the most international of the war. Australians and New Zealanders, every ethnicity in South Asia, North Africans, Senegalese and Sudanese made common cause with French, English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish soldiers against the Turkish, Arab, Kurdish, Armenian and Circassian combatants in the Ottoman army and their German and Austrian allies.
>
> (Rogan, 2016 p.27)

(b) The myth of a 'short war'

The long-standing premise that Germany's leaders took their country into what would be a 'short-war' is now under review. Recent scholarship, centred on the work of Stig Förster at the Universitat Bern, has used archival research to suggest that many of Germany's military planners fully understood that the war could be protracted (Förster, 2002 p.681–93). Their fears, for example, of Russian military might, were enough to inform them that a short, victorious war might not be within easy reach. The fact that they willingly proceeded, into the abyss with all its obvious risks, seems even more remarkable, when we begin to see that they knew a war could last from six months to two years. Mark Harrison summarizes the crucial importance of these points:

> 'The first movers expected that action would be followed by counteraction. While the ignorant many hoped for a short war, the informed few rationally feared a longer, wider conflict. They planned for this, acknowledging that final victory was far from certain'.
>
> (Harrison, 2014)

(c) Country by country

Our understanding of the war can only be enhanced by individual studies of each of the countries involved. These shed new light on the origins, conduct and consequences of the Great War. A shared characteristic of the books mentioned here is that they reflect the most recent research and thinking on how the transformative violence of the Great War shaped Europe's development. Manfried Rauchensteiner's *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy* (2014) is not for the faint-hearted. His epic study weighs in at more than 1,000 pages! However, it offers many insights into the nature of the campaigns and more importantly, their cost. More manageable in size, but equally worthwhile is Alexander Watson's *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914–1918* (2015). Indispensable is Holger H. Herwig's *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary 1914–1918* (2014). Herwig is one of the foremost authorities on the war but writes in a lively, highly readable style. In similar vein, Sean McMeekin's work is also gripping and accessible. His book *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (2013) offers convincing arguments for a fresh focus on Russian responsibility for the outbreak of the war. David R. Stone has used recent archival research to take a fresh look at the Eastern Front in his work *The Russian Army in the Great War* (2015). Leonard V. Smith provides a very helpful synthesis of research in *France and the Great War 1914–1918* (2003). Finally, Eugene Rogan's *The Fall of the Ottomans* (2016) is a highly authoritative study of an empire whose history in the Great War can sometimes be neglected.

(d) Was the home front exclusively the domain of women and children?

The notion that men went off to fight leaving behind women to deal with the manifold issues faced on the home front is also coming under review. In Holger Herwig's words:

> The home front was not exclusively the domain of the women and children. Put differently, the perceived rigid division between an all-male battlefront and a 'feminized' homeland had undergone radical re-examination. In fact, hundreds of thousands of males remained at home … The sociologist Klaus Theweleit has argued that these hundreds of thousands of males (to which one can also add catholic priests) found the urban 'feminized zone' a hostile place. It was widely regarded especially by soldiers as the realm of 'polluted' women, shirkers, draft dodgers … The 'home front' had been brutalized in many ways (although differently) as much as the fighting front.
>
> (Herwig, 2014 p.233)

2.2 1914

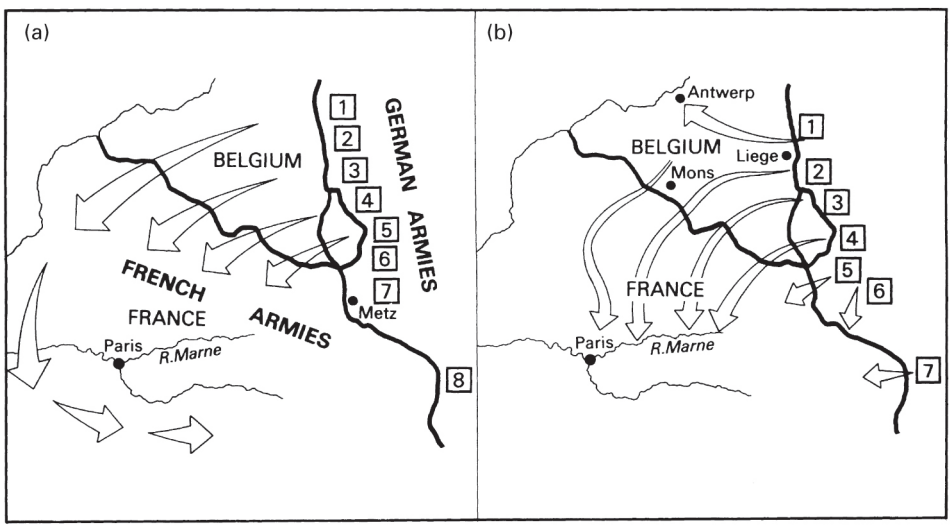
(a) The Western Front

On the Western Front the German advance was held up by unexpectedly strong Belgian resistance; it took the Germans over two weeks to capture Brussels, the Belgian capital. This was an important delay because it gave the British time to organize themselves, and left the Channel ports free, enabling the British Expeditionary Force to land. Instead of sweeping round in a wide arc, capturing the Channel ports and approaching Paris from the west (as the Schlieffen Plan intended, if indeed the Germans *were* attempting to carry out

the plan), the Germans found themselves just east of Paris, making straight for the city. They penetrated to within twenty miles of Paris, and the French government withdrew to Bordeaux; but the nearer they got to Paris, the more the German impetus slowed up. There were problems in keeping the armies supplied with food and ammunition, and the troops became exhausted by the long marches in the August heat. In September the faltering Germans were attacked by the French under Joffre in *the Battle of the Marne* (see Map 2.1); they were driven back to the River Aisne, where they were able to dig trenches. *This battle was vitally important; some historians regard it as one of the most decisive battles in modern history*:

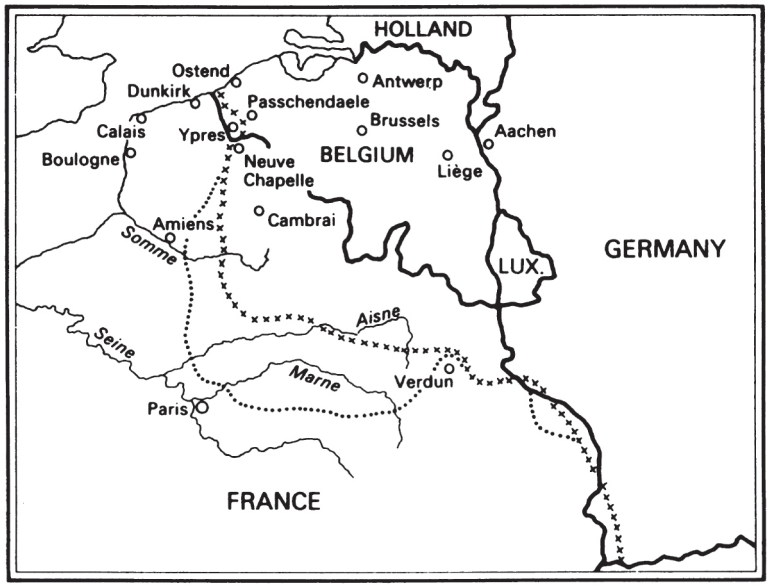
- It ruined the Schlieffen Plan once and for all: France would not be knocked out in six weeks, and all hopes of a short war were dashed.
- The Germans would have to face a full-scale war on two fronts, which they had probably never intended.
- The war of movement was over; the trench lines eventually stretched from the Alps to the Channel coast (see Map 2.2).
- There was time for the British navy to bring its crippling blockade to bear on Germany's ports.

The other important event of 1914 was that although the Germans captured Antwerp, the British Expeditionary Force held grimly on to Ypres. This probably saved the Channel ports of Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne, making it possible to land and supply more British troops. Clearly the war was not going to be over by Christmas – it was settling down into a long, drawn-out struggle of attrition.



Map 2.1 **The Schlieffen Plan**

The Schlieffen Plan intended that the German right wing would move swiftly through Belgium to the coast, capture the Channel ports, and then sweep round in a wide arc to the west and south of Paris, almost surrounding the French armies – see (a). In practice, the Plan failed to work out. The Germans were held up by strong Belgian resistance; they failed to capture the Channel ports, failed to outflank the French armies and were halted at the First Battle of the Marne – see (b).



Map 2.2 **The Western Front**

(b) The Eastern Front

On the Eastern Front the Russians mobilized more quickly than the Germans expected, but then made the mistake of invading both Austria and Germany at the same time. Though they were successful against Austria, occupying the province of Galicia, the Germans brought Hindenburg out of retirement and defeated the Russians twice, at *Tannenberg* (August) and *the Masurian Lakes* (September), driving them out of Germany. *These battles were important*: the Russians lost vast amounts of equipment and ammunition, which had taken them years to build up. Although they had six and a quarter million men mobilized by the end of 1914, a third of them were without rifles. The Russians never recovered from this setback, whereas German self-confidence was boosted. When Turkey entered the war, the outlook for Russia was bleak, since Turkey could cut her main supply and trade route from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean (Map 2.3). One bright spot for the Allies was that the Serbs drove out an Austrian invasion in fine style at the end of 1914, and Austrian morale was at rock bottom.

2.3 1915

(a) Stalemate in the west

In the west the stalemate continued, though several attempts were made to break the trench line. The British tried at Neuve Chapelle and Loos, the French tried in Champagne; the Germans attacked again at Ypres. But, like all the attacks on the Western Front until 1918,

Map 2.3 **Europe at War**

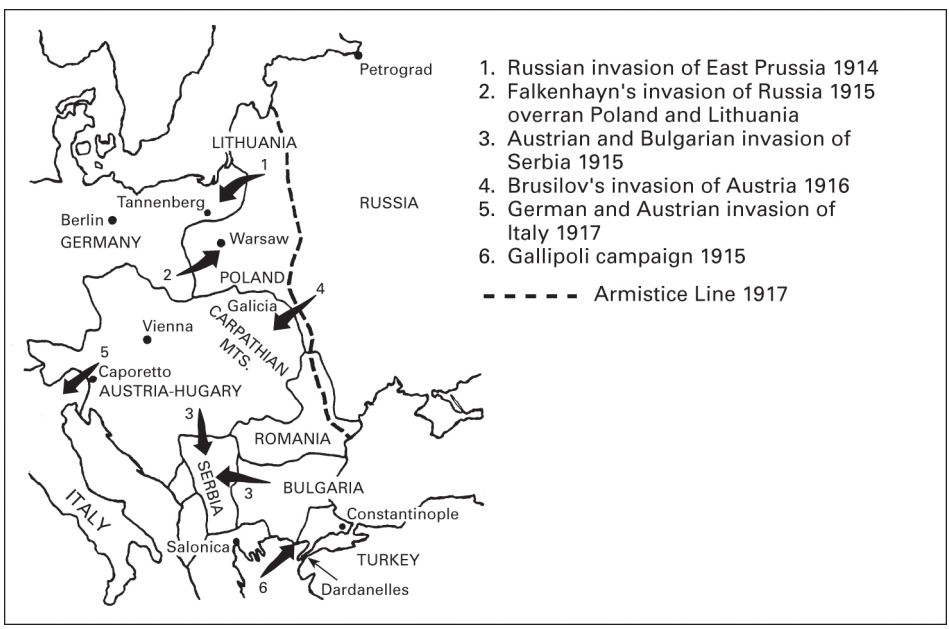
these attempts failed to make a decisive breakthrough. *The difficulties of trench warfare were always the same*:

- There was barbed wire in no-man's land between the two lines of opposing trenches, which the attacking side tried to clear away by a massive artillery bombardment; but this removed any chance of a quick surprise attack since the enemy always had plenty of warning.
- Reconnaissance aircraft and observation balloons could spot concentrations of troops on the roads leading up to the trenches.
- Trenches were difficult to capture because the increased firepower provided by magazine rifles and machine-guns made frontal attacks suicidal and meant that cavalry were useless.
- Even when a trench line was breached, advance was difficult because the ground had been churned up by the artillery barrage and there was more deadly machine-gun fire to contend with.
- Any ground won was difficult to defend since it usually formed what was called a *salient* – a bulge in the trench line. The sides, or flanks, of these salients were vulnerable to attack, and troops could be surrounded and cut off.
- During the attack on Ypres in 1915, the Germans used poison gas, but when the wind changed direction it was blown back towards their own lines and they suffered more casualties than the Allies, especially when the Allies released some gas of their own.

(b) The east

In the east, Russia's fortunes were mixed: they had further successes against Austria, but they met defeat whenever they clashed with the Germans, who captured Warsaw and the whole of Poland. The Turkish blockade of the Dardanelles was beginning to hamper the Russians, who were already running short of arms and ammunition. It was partly to clear the Dardanelles and open up the vital supply line to Russia via the Black Sea that the *Gallipoli Campaign* was launched. This was an idea strongly pressed by Winston Churchill (Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty) to escape from the deadlock in the west by eliminating the Turks. They were thought to be the weakest of the Central Powers because of their unstable government. Success against Turkey would enable help to be sent to Russia and might also bring Bulgaria, Greece and Romania into the war on the Allied side. It would then be possible to attack Austria from the south.

The campaign was a total failure; the first attempt, in March, an Anglo-French naval attack through the Dardanelles to capture Constantinople, failed when the ships ran into a series of mines. This ruined the surprise element, so that when the British attempted landings at the tip of the Gallipoli peninsula, the Turks had strengthened their defences and no advance could be made (April). Further landings by Australian and New Zealand troops (Anzacs) in April and by British troops in August were equally useless, and positions could only be held with great difficulty. In December the entire force was withdrawn. *The consequences were serious*: besides being a blow to Allied morale, it turned out to be the last chance of helping Russia via the Black Sea. It probably made Bulgaria decide to join the Central Powers. A Franco-British force landed at Salonika in neutral Greece to try and relieve Serbia, but it was too late. When Bulgaria entered the war in October, Serbia was quickly overrun by Bulgarians and Germans (see Map 2.4). The year 1915 was therefore not a good one for the Allies; even a British army sent to protect Anglo-Persian oil interests against a possible Turkish attack became bogged down in Mesopotamia as it approached Baghdad; it was besieged by Turks at Kut-el-Amara from December 1915 until March 1916, when it was forced to surrender.



Map 2.4 **War on the Eastern, Balkan and Italian Fronts**

(c) Italy declares war on Austria–Hungary (May 1915)

The Italians were hoping to seize Austria–Hungary's Italian-speaking provinces as well as territory along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. *A secret treaty was signed in London* in which the Allies promised Italy Trentino, the south Tyrol, Istria, Trieste, part of Dalmatia, Adalia, some islands in the Aegean Sea and a protectorate over Albania. The Allies hoped that by keeping thousands of Austrian troops occupied, the Italians would relieve pressure on the Russians. But the Italians made little headway and their efforts were to no avail: the Russians were unable to stave off defeat.

2.4 1916

(a) The Western Front

On the Western Front, 1916 is remembered for two terrible battles, *Verdun* and *the Somme*.

- *Verdun* was an important French fortress town against which the Germans under Falkenhayn launched a massive attack (February). They hoped to draw all the best French troops to its defence, destroy them and then carry out a final offensive to win the war. But the French under Pétain defended stubbornly, and in June the Germans had to abandon the attack. The French lost heavily (about 315,000 men), as the Germans intended, but so did the Germans themselves, with over 280,000 men killed and no territorial gains to show for it.
- *The Battle of the Somme* was a series of attacks, mainly by the British, beginning on 1 July and lasting through to November. The aim was to relieve pressure on the French at Verdun, take over more of the trench line as the French army weakened and keep the Germans fully committed, so that they would be unable to risk sending reinforcements to the Eastern Front against Russia. The attack began disastrously: British troops found themselves walking into deadly machine-gun fire; on the very first day 20,000 were killed and 60,000 injured. Yet Haig, the British Commander-in-Chief, did not call off the attack – it continued at intervals for over four months. At the end of it all, the Allies had made only limited advances varying between a few hundred yards and seven miles, along a 30-mile front. *The real importance of the battle was the blow to German morale*, as they realized that Britain (where conscription was introduced for the first time in May) was a military power to be reckoned with.

Losses on both sides, killed or wounded, were appalling (Germans 650,000; British 418,000; French 194,000). The Allied generals, especially Haig, came under severe criticism for persisting with suicidal frontal attacks. In spite of the failures and the appalling casualties, both British and French generals remained convinced that mass infantry charges – the 'big push' – were the only way to make a breakthrough. None of them showed any sign of producing alternative tactics, and tens of thousands of lives were sacrificed for no apparent gain. It was after one of the disastrous attacks in 1915 that a German officer remarked that the British army were 'lions led by donkeys'. Haig came in for the most serious criticism – for the majority of historians, he became the epitome of Allied incompetence and lack of imagination. One historian, W. J. Laffin, went so far as to call his book about the war *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War I* (1988), and for him the chief 'donkey' was Haig. J. P. Harris in *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (2008) is rather more balanced. He argues that Haig certainly found it difficult to cope with the unprecedented situation that he found himself in on the Western Front and he misjudged

the strength of the German forces. He was slow to see beyond the tactic of the 'big push' and must therefore bear much of the responsibility for the massive casualties. However, he did eventually show himself to be receptive to new techniques and strategies and played a vital role in the 1918 campaign which brought the final collapse of German forces.

The horrors of the Somme also contributed to the fall of the British prime minister Asquith, who resigned in 1916 after criticism of British tactics mounted. And yet the events of 1916 *did* contribute towards the eventual Allied victory; Hindenburg himself admitted in his memoirs that the Germans could not have survived many more campaigns with heavy losses like those at Verdun and the Somme.

(b) David Lloyd George becomes British prime minister (December 1916)

Taking over from Asquith as prime minister, *Lloyd George's contribution to the Allied war effort and the defeat of the Central Powers was invaluable*. His methods were dynamic and decisive; already as Minister of Munitions since May 1915, he had improved the supply of shells and machine-guns, encouraged the development of new weapons (the Stokes light mortar and the tank), which Kitchener (Minister of War) had turned down, and taken control of mines, factories and railways so that the war effort could be properly centralized. As prime minister during 1917, he set up a small *war cabinet*, so that quick decisions could be taken. He brought shipping and agriculture under government control and introduced the Ministry of National Service to organize the mobilization of men into the army. He also played an important part in the adoption of the convoy system.

(c) In the East

In June 1916 the Russians under Brusilov attacked the Austrians, in response to a plea from Britain and France for some action to divert German attention away from Verdun. They managed to break the front and advanced 100 miles, taking 400,000 prisoners and large amounts of equipment. The Austrians were demoralized, but the strain was exhausting the Russians as well. The Romanians invaded Austria (August), but the Germans swiftly came to the Austrians' rescue, occupied the whole of Romania and seized her wheat and oil supplies – not a happy end to 1916 for the Allies.

2.5 THE WAR AT SEA

The general public in Germany and Britain expected a series of naval battles between the rival Dreadnought fleets, something like the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), in which Nelson's British fleet had defeated the combined French and Spanish fleets. But both sides were cautious and dared not risk any action which might result in the loss of their main fleets. The British Admiral Jellicoe was particularly cautious; Churchill said he 'was the only man on either side who could have lost the war in an afternoon'. Nor were the Germans anxious for a confrontation, because they had only sixteen of the latest Dreadnoughts against twenty-seven British.

(a) The Allies aimed to use their navies in three ways

- to blockade the Central Powers, preventing goods from entering or leaving, slowly starving them out;

- to keep trade routes open between Britain, her empire and the rest of the world, so that the Allies themselves would not starve;
- to transport British troops to the continent and keep them supplied via the Channel ports.

The British were successful in carrying out these aims; they went into action against German units stationed abroad, and at the *Battle of the Falkland Islands*, destroyed one of the main German squadrons. By the end of 1914 nearly all German armed surface ships had been destroyed, apart from their main fleet (which did not venture out of the Heligoland Bight) and the squadron blockading the Baltic to cut off supplies to Russia. In 1915 the British navy was involved in the *Gallipoli Campaign.*

(b) The Allied blockade caused problems

Britain was trying to prevent the Germans from using the neutral Scandinavian and Dutch ports to break the blockade; this involved *stopping and searching all neutral ships* and confiscating any goods suspected of being intended for enemy hands. The United States objected strongly to this, since they were anxious to continue trading with both sides.

(c) The Germans retaliated with mines and submarine attacks

These tactics seemed to be the only alternative left to the Germans, since their surface vessels had either been destroyed or were blockaded in port. At first they respected neutral shipping and passenger liners, but it was soon clear that the German submarine (U-boat) blockade was not effective. This was partly because they had insufficient U-boats and partly because there were problems of identification: the British tried to fool the Germans by flying neutral flags and by using passenger liners to transport arms and ammunition. On 7 May 1915 the British liner *Lusitania* was sunk by a torpedo attack. In fact the *Lusitania* was armed and carrying vast quantities of weapons and ammunition, as the Germans knew; hence their claim that the sinking was not just an act of barbarism against defenceless civilians.

This had important consequences: out of almost two thousand dead, 128 were Americans. President Wilson therefore found that the United States would have to take sides to protect her trade. Whereas the British blockade did not interfere with the safety of passengers and crews, German tactics certainly did. For the time being, however, American protests caused Bethmann to tone down the submarine campaign, making it even less effective.

(d) The Battle of Jutland (31 May 1916)

This was the main event at sea during 1916; it was the only time in the entire war that the main battle-fleets emerged and engaged each other; the result was indecisive. The German admiral von Scheer tried to lure part of the British fleet out from its base so that that section could be destroyed by the numerically superior Germans. However, more British ships came out than he had anticipated, and after the two fleets had shelled each other on and off for several hours, the Germans decided to retire to base, firing torpedoes as they went. On balance, the Germans could claim that they had won the battle since they lost only eleven ships to Britain's fourteen. The real importance of the battle lay in the fact that *the Germans had failed to destroy British sea power*: the German High Seas Fleet

stayed in Kiel for the rest of the war, leaving Britain's control of the surface complete. In desperation at the food shortages caused by the British blockade, the Germans embarked on 'unrestricted' submarine warfare, and this was to have fatal results for them.

(e) 'Unrestricted' submarine warfare (began January 1917)

As the Germans had been concentrating on the production of U-boats since the Battle of Jutland, this campaign was extremely effective. They attempted to sink all enemy and neutral merchant ships in the Atlantic; although they knew that this was likely to bring the United States into the war, they hoped that *Britain and France would be starved into surrender* before the Americans could make any vital contribution. They almost did it: the peak of German success came in April 1917, when 430 ships were lost; Britain was down to about six weeks' corn supply, and although the United States came into the war in April, it was bound to be several months before their help became effective. However, the situation was saved by Lloyd George, who insisted that the Admiralty adopt a convoy system. A convoy was a large number of merchant ships sailing together, so that they could be protected by escorting warships. This drastically reduced losses and meant that the German gamble had failed. *The submarine campaign was important because it brought the United States into the war*. The British navy therefore, helped by the Americans, played a vitally important role in the defeat of the Central Powers; by the middle of 1918 it had achieved its three aims.

2.6 1917

(a) In the west

On the Western Front, 1917 was a year of Allied failure. A massive French attack in Champagne, under Nivelle, achieved nothing except mutiny in the French army, which was successfully sorted out by Pétain. From June to November the British fought *the Third Battle of Ypres*, usually remembered as *Passchendaele*, in appallingly muddy conditions; British casualties were again enormous – 324,000 compared with 200,000 Germans – for an advance of only four miles. More significant was *the Battle of Cambrai, which demonstrated that tanks, used properly, might break the deadlock of trench warfare*. Here, 381 massed British tanks made a great breach in the German line, but lack of reserves prevented the success from being followed up. However, the lesson had been observed, and *Cambrai became the model for the successful Allied attacks of 1918*. Meanwhile the Italians were heavily defeated by Germans and Austrians at Caporetto (October) and retreated in disorder. This rather unexpectedly proved to be an important turning point. Italian morale revived, perhaps because they were faced with having to defend their homeland against the hated Austrians. The defeat also led to the setting-up of an *Allied Supreme War Council*. The new French premier, Clemenceau, a great war leader in the same mould as Lloyd George, rallied the wilting French.

(b) On the Eastern Front

Disaster struck the Allies when *Russia withdrew from the war (December 1917)*. Continuous heavy losses at the hands of the Germans, lack of arms and supplies, problems of transport and communications and utterly incompetent leadership caused two revolutions, and the Bolsheviks (later known as communists), who took, over power in November, were willing to make peace. Thus in 1918 the entire weight of German

forces could be thrown against the west; without the United States, the Allies would have been hard pressed. Encouragement was provided by the British capture of Baghdad and Jerusalem from the Turks, giving them control of vast oil supplies.

(c) The entry of the United States (April 1917)

This was caused partly by the German U-boat campaign, and also by the discovery that Germany was trying to persuade Mexico to declare war on the United States, promising her Texas, New Mexico and Arizona in return. The Americans had hesitated about siding with the autocratic Russian government, but the overthrow of the tsar in the March revolution removed this obstacle. *The United States made an important contribution to the Allied victory*: they supplied Britain and France with food, merchant ships and credit, though actual military help came slowly. By the end of 1917 only one American division had been in action, but by mid-1918 over half a million men were involved. Most important were the psychological boost which the American potential in resources of men and materials gave the Allies, and the corresponding blow it gave to German morale.

2.7 THE CENTRAL POWERS DEFEATED

(a) The German spring offensive, 1918

This major German attack was launched by Ludendorff in a last, desperate attempt to win the war before too many US troops arrived, and before discontent in Germany led to revolution. It almost came off: throwing in all the extra troops released from the east, the Germans broke through on the Somme (March), and by the end of May were only 40 miles from Paris; the Allies seemed to be falling apart. However, under the overall command of the French Marshal Foch, they managed to hold on as the German advance lost momentum and created an awkward bulge.

(b) The Allied counter-offensive begins (8 August)

Launched near Amiens, the counter-attack involved hundreds of tanks attacking in short, sharp jabs at several different points along a wide front instead of massing on one narrow front. This forced the Germans to withdraw their entire line and avoided forming a salient. Slowly but surely the Germans were forced back until by the end of September the Allies had broken through the Hindenburg Line. Though Germany itself had not yet been invaded, Ludendorff was now convinced that they would be defeated in the spring of 1919. He insisted that the German government ask President Wilson of the United States for an armistice (ceasefire) (3 October). He hoped to get less severe terms based on Wilson's 14 Points. By asking for peace in 1918 he would save Germany from invasion and preserve the army's discipline and reputation. Fighting continued for another five weeks while negotiations went on, but eventually *an armistice was signed on 11 November*.

(c) Why did the war last so long?

When the war started the majority of people on both sides believed that it would be over by Christmas. However, Britain's Secretary for War, Lord Kitchener, himself a successful general, told the cabinet, much to its collective dismay, that it would last nearer three years

than three months. Though he did not live to see the end of the war (he was drowned in 1916 on his way to Russia, when his ship struck a mine and sank), he was one of the few who had judged the situation correctly. There are several reasons why the conflict lasted so long. The two sides were fairly evenly balanced, and although the main theatre of war was in Europe, it quickly became a global conflict. Other countries that had not been in the original alliance systems decided to join in, some because they saw it as a chance to gain new territory, and others waited to see which side looked the more likely to win, and then joined that side. For example, Italy (May 1915), Romania (August 1916), the United States (April 1917) and Japan joined the Allied side, while Turkey (November 1914) and Bulgaria (October 1915) joined the Central Powers. To complicate matters further, troops from the British Empire – from India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa – all played their part in the fighting, which eventually spread into the eastern Mediterranean, Asia and Africa.

The main countries involved in the war had very strongly held war aims which they were absolutely determined to achieve. The Germans, anxious to protect themselves from becoming 'encircled', aimed to take territory from Poland in the east and Belgium in the west to act as buffer zones against Russia and France. The French were obsessed with taking back Alsace-Lorraine, which the Germans had taken in 1871. The British would never allow Belgium, a country so near to their coast, to be controlled by a hostile power like Germany. Austria–Hungary was desperate to preserve its empire against the ambitions of Serbia. Right from the beginning these competing war aims meant that it would be almost impossible to reach an acceptable negotiated solution.

Once stalemate had been reached on the Western Front with troops bogged down in lines of trenches, the Allies were faced with difficult problems: the weapons available to the Central Powers as they defended their trenches were more deadly than those available to the attackers. German troops, using fixed machine-guns in trenches protected by barbed wire, had a huge advantage over the attackers, who relied too much on preceding artillery bombardments. Another remarkable factor prolonging the war was the way in which propaganda helped to motivate and encourage the general public as well as the military on both sides. Morale was boosted and support for the war sustained by newspapers, posters, films and advertisements directed at all classes in society to make them proud of their own country and way of life, while spreading stories of horror and atrocity about the enemy. In Germany, in spite of food shortages, labour unrest and a general war-weariness, public support for the war continued. The defeat of Russia encouraged the German generals to continue the struggle and launch what turned out to be a last desperate attempt to break through on the Western Front in spring 1918, before too many American troops arrived on the scene. A combination of all these factors meant that there would have to be a fight to the finish until one side or the other was either overrun and occupied by the enemy, or was so completely exhausted that it could not carry on fighting.

(d) Why did the Central Powers lose the war?

The reasons can be briefly summarized:

- Once the Schlieffen Plan had failed, removing all hope of a quick German victory, it was bound to be a strain for them, *facing war on two fronts*.
- *Allied sea power was decisive*, enforcing the deadly blockade, which caused desperate food shortages among the civilian population and crippled exports, while at the same time making sure that the Allied armies were fully supplied.
- The German submarine campaign failed in the face of *convoys* protected by British, American and Japanese destroyers; the campaign itself was a mistake because it brought the United States into the war.

- The entry of the United States brought *vast new resources* to the Allies and made up for the departure of Russia from the war. It meant that the Allied powers were able to produce more war materials than the enemy, and in the end this proved decisive.
- Allied political leaders at the critical time – Lloyd George and Clemenceau – were probably more competent than those of the Central Powers. The unity of command under Foch probably helped, while Haig learned lessons, from the 1917 experiences, which proved to be crucial to the allied victory in the final stages of the war. In fact some historians believe that the criticisms levelled at Haig are unfair. John Terraine was one of the first to present a defence of Haig, in his book *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier* (1963). Recently Gary Sheffield has gone further; in *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (2011) he argues that, given the fact that the British had no experience of trench warfare and that they were the junior partners to the French, Haig learned remarkably quickly and proved to be an imaginative commander. Haig made four outstanding contributions to the Allied victory. First, he took a leading part in reforming the army and preparing it for a major war before 1914. Then, between 1916 and 1918 he was responsible for transforming the British Expeditionary Force from an inexperienced small force into a mass war-winning army. Thirdly, his battles in 1916 and 1917 (the Somme, Arras and Third Ypres), though his troops suffered heavy losses, played a vital role in wearing down the Germans, whose losses were also heavy. Finally Haig's generalship was a crucial component of the Allied victory in 1918. He had learned lessons about the effective use of tanks, and the avoidance of salients by using small groups of infantry attacking at different points along the trench line; his idea of transporting infantry in buses to accompany the cavalry was very effective. Eventually, too, there was a great improvement in the coordination between infantry, artillery and aerial observation. In the words of Gary Sheffield: 'Douglas Haig might not have been the greatest military figure Britain has ever produced, but he was one of the most significant – and one of the most successful.'
- The continuous strain of heavy losses told on the Germans – they lost their best troops in the 1918 offensive and the new troops were young and inexperienced. At the same time the forces available to the Allies were increasing as more Americans arrived, bringing the total of American troops to around 2 million. From July 1918 onwards the Germans were forced into their final retreat. An epidemic of deadly Spanish flu added to their difficulties and morale was low as they retreated. Many suffered a psychological collapse: during the last three months of the war some 350,000 German troops actually surrendered.
- Germany was badly let down by her allies and was constantly having to help out the Austrians and Bulgarians. The defeat of Bulgaria by the British (from Salonika) and Serbs (29 September 1918) was the final straw for many German soldiers, who could see no chance of victory now. When Austria was defeated by Italy at Vittorio-Veneto and Turkey surrendered (both in October), the end was near.

The combination of military defeat and dire food shortages produced a great war-weariness, leading to mutiny in the navy, destruction of morale in the army and revolution at home.

(e) Effects of the war

The impact of the war was extraordinarily wide-ranging, which was not surprising given that it was the first 'total war' in history. This means that it involved not just armies and navies but entire populations, and it was the first big conflict between modern,

industrialized nations. New methods of warfare and new weapons were introduced – tanks, submarines, bombers, machine-guns, heavy artillery and mustard gas. With so many men away in the armed forces, women had to take their places in factories and in other jobs which had previously been carried out by men. In the Central Powers and in Russia, the civilian populations suffered severe hardships caused by the blockades. In all the European states involved in the war, governments organized ordinary people as never before, so that the entire country was geared up to the war effort. The conflict caused a decline in Europe's prestige in the eyes of the rest of the world. The fact that the region which had been thought of as the centre of civilization could have allowed itself to experience such appalling carnage and destruction was a sign of the beginning of the end of European domination of the rest of the world. The effects on individual countries were sometimes little short of traumatic: the empires which had dominated central and eastern Europe for over two hundred years disappeared almost overnight.

- The most striking effect of the war was the appalling death toll among the armed forces. Almost 2 million Germans died, 1.7 million Russians, 1.5 million French, over a million Austro-Hungarians and about 1 million from Britain and her empire. Italy lost around 530,000 troops, Turkey 325,000, Serbia 322,000, Romania 158,000, the United States 116,000, Bulgaria 49,000 and Belgium 41,000. And this did not include those crippled by the war, and civilian casualties. A sizeable proportion of an entire generation of young men had perished – the 'lost generation'; France, for example, lost around 20 per cent of men of military age. However, military historian Dan Todman in *The First World War: Myth and Memory* (2005) argues that as time has passed, the public perception of the war has changed. He produces evidence suggesting that the 'lost generation' interpretation is something of a myth. Certainly casualties were severe but were not the wholesale destruction of a generation that was claimed. According to Todman, overall, just 12 per cent of fighting men died. Although some 20,000 British soldiers were killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, this was not typical of the war as a whole. In the circumstances, Todman insists, Haig had no alternative – his was the only rational strategy, and in the end, whatever the criticisms, the war *was* won. Still, many find it difficult to put aside the long-held perception of the war as a 'futile mud- and blood-bath', and no doubt historians will continue to find it a controversial topic.
- In Germany, hardship and defeat caused a revolution: the Kaiser Wilhelm II was compelled to abdicate and a republic was declared. Over the next few years the Weimar Republic (as it became known) experienced severe economic, political and social problems. In 1933 it was brought to an end when Hitler became German Chancellor.
- The Habsburg Empire collapsed completely. The last emperor, Karl I, was forced to abdicate (November 1918) and the various nationalities declared themselves independent; Austria and Hungary split into two separate states.
- In Russia the pressures of war caused two revolutions in 1917. The first (February–March) overthrew the tsar, Nicholas II, and the second (October–November) brought Lenin and the Bolsheviks (Communists) to power.
- Although Italy was on the winning side, the war had been a drain on her resources and she was heavily in debt. Mussolini took advantage of the government's unpopularity, to take over control – Italy was the first European state after the war to allow itself to fall under a fascist dictatorship.
- On the other hand, some countries outside Europe, particularly Japan, China and the United States, took advantage of Europe's preoccupation with the war to expand their trade at Europe's expense. For example, the United States' share of world

trade grew from 10 per cent in 1914 to over 20 per cent by 1919. Since they were unable to obtain European imports during the war, Japan and China began their own programmes of industrialization. During the 1920s the Americans enjoyed a great economic boom and their future prosperity seemed assured. Within a few years, however, it became clear that they had made the mistakes of over-confidence and over-expansion: in October 1929 the Wall Street Crash heralded the beginning of a severe economic crisis which spread throughout the world and became known as 'the Great Depression'.

- Many politicians and leaders were determined that the horrors of the First World War should never be repeated. President Woodrow Wilson of the United States came up with a plan for a League of Nations, which would settle future disputes by arbitration and keep the world at peace through a system of 'collective security' (see Chapter 3). Unfortunately the job of the League of Nations was made more difficult by some of the terms of the peace settlement reached after the war, and the peace itself was unstable.
- In his recent book *The Great War and the Making of the Modern World* (2011), Jeremy Black makes the point that the war led to the final stage of the partition of Africa, when the peace settlement placed Germany's colonies in Africa under the control of the League of Nations. The League allowed them to be 'looked after' by various member states. This meant that in practice, for example, Britain acquired Tanganyika, while Britain and France divided Togoland and the Cameroons between them, and South Africa gained German South West Africa (Namibia).

2.8 HISTORIOGRAPHY: THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GREAT WAR

(a) Was the war worth it?

A century after the conflict, historians have to ask searching questions such as whether the war was worthwhile. Gary Sheffield believes that the sacrifice, from the British point of view, was worthwhile: 'Imperfect as the world undoubtedly was in 1919, a scenario in which Germany was victorious would have been much worse. France would have been reduced to a vassal state; Belgium would have become a de facto German colony; liberal democracy would have been largely extinguished in Europe' (BBC, 2018 p.12).

Mark Harrison looks at the same theme in this way:

Another myth characterises fighting in the Great War as needless (and) wasteful of life. In fact, there was no other way to defeat the enemy. Attrition was not a result of trench warfare. Also, casualties on both sides were heavier in the opening and closing stages when men fought out in the open.

Attrition became a calculated strategy on both sides. From the Allied standpoint, the rationality of attrition is not immediately clear. The French and British generally lost troops at a faster rate than the Germans. Based on that alone, the Allies could have expected to lose the war.

The forgotten margin that explains the war was economic (Harrison, 2014).

(b) Did Versailles really fuel the rise of political extremism?

The decisions made in six months at Versailles have carried a heavy weight. It has frequently been argued that a straight line can be drawn from the allegedly harsh terms set out in Paris to the rise of ultra-nationalist agitators such as Hitler. However, it could

just as well be argued that by the early 1920s the majority of German voters had placed their support behind moderates rather than extremists. The poor performance of the Nazi Party in the 1924 Reichstag elections in which they gained only 6.5 per cent of votes cast in May and only 3 per cent in December suggests that the German electorate had made adjustment to the terms of Versailles within only a few years of its signature. By 1924 it began to appear that the Weimar democracy could carry the German people forward to happier times. If the German people had retained Versailles at the top of their list of concerns, it is hard to understand why the Nazi vote in 1928 was at the utterly marginal level of 2.6 per cent.

1 The cost of war

Thirty-six countries mobilized 65 to 70 million men. Using the British Army as an example, it is believed that boys as young as thirteen and fourteen lied about their age to enlist. In the British Army it seems likely that the oldest individual to serve was sixty-seven years old. Recent estimates calculate that between 9 to 10 million men never returned. We may never know the exact figure. For example, as David Stone points out in his recent work on *The Russian Army and the Great War*, Russian casualty figures remain difficult to calculate: 'Most combat deaths were the result of artillery, and high explosives could bury or obliterate those whom it killed, leaving no trace for military bureaucrats to track … In Russia, where space was vast, government thin, and the population still largely illiterate, records were difficult to maintain' (Stone, 2015 p.11).

It seems likely that more than $200 billion was spent on the war. Economist Mark Harrison writes that 'The First World War spilled blood and squandered resources on a colossal scale. For several years, the European powers put one-third to one half of their national incomes into the fighting' (BBC, 2018 p.17). Richard J. Evans states that 'the war destroyed Europe's economy for a generation. It did not recover until the 1950s. The intervening decades witnessed hyperinflation in a number of European countries, then a world economic depression more serious than anything experienced since' (BBC, 2018 p.13).

Complete devastation was visited upon much of Belgium, northern France, Serbia and large parts of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. Chemical waste absorbed by the soil in parts of northern France is still detectable to this day. Recent scholarship by Tait Keller offers a fascinating new perspective on the global level of the environmental cost of the war allowing us to look beyond the human cost to see a further dimension to the Great War.

> To keep soldiers fighting and engines firing, militaries commandeered energy resources throughout the biosphere. A quick global tour illustrates the war's environmental reach. Ottoman forces levelled cedar forests in Lebanon to fuel lime kilns and locomotives. German occupation forces in eastern Europe dined on European bison, nearly exterminating a keystone species in the great boreal forest of Bialowieza. Canning perishable goods for soldiers' meal kits massively expanded tin-mining operations on the Malay Peninsula and in the Dutch East Indies, where hydraulic sluicing choked rivers with clay runoff … The world's largest sodium nitrate beds in Chiles's Atacama desert supplied the nitrogen-based inorganic fertilizer that kept crop yields from utterly collapsing in western Europe. The same chemicals also constituted the basic ingredients in explosives.

Beyond the new perspective gained by looking at where the resources came from, Keller adds the analysis that 'through its new energy regimes, the First World War ushered in a century whose magnitude of environmental change matched its terrible violence' (BBC, 2018 p.18).

(c) Did violence come to an end in November 1918?

In Germany, Austria–Hungary, Russia and beyond there was no simple cut-off point between war and peace. As Alexander Watson states:

> 'Normality' had become a permanent casualty of the war. True, the mass slaughter … was over, but misery, deprivation and shortages continued until, and even beyond, the summer of 1919 … The violence was also not ended. Although smaller in scale, it had transferred into the homelands that men had sought to protect. The political and ethnic fault lines deepened by war were the new 'fronts' of the post-armistice period … The First World War had ended. Its legacy of suffering and violence proved far longer lasting.
>
> (Watson, 2015 p.556)

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Chapter

3 A bitter peace 1918–33

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The end of fighting on the Western Front in November 1918 was greeted with widespread relief. The League of Nations formally came into existence in January 1920 and ostensibly seemed to mark a dividing line between the unparalleled brutality of war and a newly found desire for peace and reconciliation. It seemed that well-intentioned statesmen in the League's headquarters in Geneva might be able to resolve disputes through the application of reason. Even the League's most ardent critics would concede that there was a brief period during the 1920s when the new mechanisms for peace appeared to be functioning as its founders had hoped. Despite short-lived evidence of a new climate, recent interpretations largely agree that the 1920s continued to be marked by civil wars and bitter international relations. In 1929, the importance of financial stability to a harmonious international climate became clear as the Great Depression ravaged the world economy. As the economic situation deteriorated, so too did international relations. The League came to look increasingly irrelevant, as the Japanese invasion of Manchuria (1931) and the Italian assault of Abyssinia (1935) went unchecked. The rise of dictators who favoured war over peace was marked most damagingly by the appointment of Adolf Hitler as German Chancellor in 1933. By 1938–9 with the world once again on the brink of war, the League had lost all credibility and would play no part in determining whether a new worldwide conflict could be avoided.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the striking words of the eminent German historian, Jörn Leonhard, 'destruction and violence, and the inability to construct a lasting peace, persisted well beyond 1918. It may be possible to say quite precisely when the war began, but on closer examination the question of exactly when it ended proves to be incomparably more difficult' (Leonhard, 2018 p.43). Leading authority Robert Gerwarth suggests a shift in emphasis from the four-year European war to a wider imperial conflict lasting from 1911 to 1923 is long overdue. His perspective sees the Italian attack of 1911 against parts of the Ottoman Empire in Northern Africa and the Mediterranean as marking the start of the conflict. The end of this intense spell of violence can be marked by the Lausanne Conference of 1923. As Richard J. Evans states, 'The war, quite apart from its unprecedented destructiveness, did release all kinds of demons and plagues upon the world' (BBC History, 2018). Such interpretations mean that we can now see more clearly than ever that the two decades that followed the First World War were far from harmonious, and frequently crisis-ridden.

Indeed, just as the war itself seemed to have dragged humanity to the limits of its capacity to suffer, one more truly hideous event lay in store. Scientists and historians now believe that the first case of what came to be known as 'Spanish flu' occurred at

an American army base, Camp Funston, in Kansas in March 1918. One of the supreme ironies of this event was that the liberating American troops were about to inadvertently transmit the disease to their European colleagues. By late summer, the virus reached the busy military port of Brest in France. Starting in September 1918 and carrying on into the winter months, an exceptionally virulent strain of influenza spread across the globe. Within months, places as far afield and seemingly remote as Iceland, New Zealand and northwest Russia were all hit hard. Its sustained impact in Spain led to the outbreak being inaccurately dubbed Spanish flu. A further, terrifying element of the pandemic was that it seems to have been particularly dangerous for young men in their twenties. Estimates of those killed by this cruellest of outbreaks range from twenty to forty million people. The influenza outbreak of 1918 then was responsible for more deaths than the Great War itself. It is perhaps emblematic of the fact that while the First World War was coming to an end, the period of hardship, suffering and even armed conflict was still not over.

In the public consciousness, the armistice signed at 5.00 am in a railway carriage in a forest clearing at Compiegne in France still has a powerful resonance. The guns fell silent on the Western Front six hours later. A peace conference would be held in the New Year, but the settlements which were reached were often ferociously bitter in spirit. It is also apparent that fresh conflicts continued to arise across the globe that in some senses would not be resolved until 1945. Therefore, more recent historical interpretations see the First World War and the bitter peace that followed variously refer to the 'collapse of civilization,' or a 'second Thirty Years' War' (from 1914 to 1945) Thus 1914–18 was the beginning, not the end, of a period in which Europe became a 'dark continent' of violence (Leonhard, 2018 p.14). As Sally Marks states in *The Illusion of Peace,*

> The advent of peace was highly relative. The major powers were no longer in bloody collision, but civil war raged in Russia, Ireland, China, Turkey and briefly in the Ruhr. Foreign troops remained in Russia; the Baltic area was a battleground; and Poland invaded Russia while Hungary marched briefly on Poland, Romania and Slovakia. There was fighting on the Finnish frontier and in Fiume; in Silesia Germans and Poles waged an undeclared war; most Balkan borders were aflame; and in Anatolia the Turks fought the Greeks, backed by the British. Yet the world was officially at peace.
>
> (Marks, 1976 p.32)

3.2 BREST-LITOVSK 1917–18

This bitterness of spirit, even when discussing 'peace' was already apparent in the east as early as 1917. While the Peace of Versailles, which marked the end of the war in the west, has continued to be the subject of much historical debate, the Peace of Brest-Litovsk which formed the basis of the settlement in the east has received much less attention, at least in the west. Nevertheless, the 'forgotten' treaty had massive implications not only in terms of its domestic impact on Russia and Germany but also with regard to the final outcome of the First World War. Indeed, the allegedly brutal manner in which the Russians were treated by Germany was often brought up to defend the Versailles peace against German accusations of unfairness.

It was a staggering scenario. Representing Bolshevik Russia, Leon Trotsky, the revolutionary People's Commissar for War, came face to face with the aristocratic German officer corps. The setting was the provincial town of Brest-Litovsk close to the Russian border with Germany. At stake was all the territory gained by Russia in the previous 300 years. Trotsky was initially optimistic that he would be able to resist Germany's territorial

demands, but Fritz Fischer indicates the severity of the problems he faced in the following extract from *Germany's Aims in the First World War:*

> Lenin's victory over Kerensky on November 6 and 7, 1917 could not but seem to the German government to be the crown of their military and political campaign against Russia since the autumn of 1914. At last the Russian colossus had collapsed under the pincer movement of military pressure and the social revolution fostered by Germany through the Bolsheviks … The new rulers in Petersburg were in a dilemma: on the one hand they had come to power under the slogan of peace, and therefore needed an immediate end to hostilities … On the other hand, they could not accept peace at any price, for fear of strengthening the right-wing Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks ….
>
> The German government saw the Bolsheviks' dilemma and decided to exploit it ruthlessly, in order not only to secure the comprehensive solution in the east for which it had so long been working, but also by concluding a separate peace with Russia, to decide the issue in the west and thus achieve the whole of their war aims.
>
> (Fischer, 1967 p.475–7)

Trotsky had proved himself to be a brilliant revolutionary and a supremely gifted writer and orator but at Brest-Litovsk his inexperience in diplomacy and foreign affairs was to be put to the test. Russia's exposed position was not lost on Trotsky's German counterparts. As General Hoffman pointed out to the Russians: 'The Russian delegation talks to us as if it stood victorious in our countries and could dictate conditions to us. I would like to point out that the facts are just the reverse: that the victorious German army stands in your territory' (Traynor, 1991 p.98). This brutal exposition of the military reality led to a stunning denouement in the spring of 1918. As Adam Ulam describes, 'On 1 March the Soviet delegates again reached Brest-Litovsk … to sign the most humiliating peace in Russia's modern history … On March 3 the treaty was signed. Russia had lost the Ukraine, Finland, her Polish and Baltic territories … The treaty placed the German sphere of occupation close to Petrograd … Three centuries of Russian territorial expansion were undone' (J. Traynor, 1991 p.100).

3.3 VERSAILLES

In marked contrast to the brutal terms reached at Brest-Litovsk, the notion of 'peace without victory' envisaged by the scholarly, emotionally detached American President Woodrow Wilson gave the Germans hope of a 'moderate' peace settlement even though this was the very thing they had denied the Russians in the east. Many of the factors that were to dominate the peace settlement were already falling into place. The trauma of defeat had led the old political establishment to abdicate responsibility, leaving the representatives of Germany's embryonic democracy to face the stigma of accepting defeat and punishment. The desire for revenge felt by the people of France and Britain was only heightened by the Kaiser's exile. Pressure for severe anti-German measures from the press represented a relatively new but highly significant ingredient. In these circumstances it was clear that the Americans – who had occupied the moral high ground as the only disinterested party – would play a key role in the making of the peace.

The gradual collapse of the Russian war effort in the east served to heighten the importance of the US entry in April 1917. Having played such an important part in swinging the balance of the war towards the Allies, America now sought to play an equally important role in the peace-making process. On 4 December 1918 the US cruiser *George*

Washington set sail from its harbour in New Jersey for the port of Brest in France. On board was Woodrow Wilson, 62-year-old leader of the Democratic Party and two-term President of the United States of America. In the following extract J. A. Thompson highlights the importance of his mission.

> Woodrow Wilson was the first American President to leave the Western Hemisphere during his period of office, and as befitted him, the circumstances in which he did so were neither casual nor frivolous. He went to Europe in late 1918 to take part in the peace conference following a war that the United States had played a crucial part in bringing to a decisive end. His aim was to secure a peace that accorded with the proposals he set out in his Fourteen Points address of January 1918 and in other speeches – a peace that would be based upon justice and thus secure consent, that would embody liberal principles (the self-determination of peoples as far as practicable, the prohibition of discriminatory trade barriers) and that would be maintained by a new international organization in which the United States, breaking its tradition of isolation, would take part – a league of nations that would provide a general guarantee of 'political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike. (Traynor, 1991 p.102)

The scale of his ambition was huge. Tooze describes how Wilson travelled to France, 'with a team of geographers, historians, political scientists and economists to make sense of the new world map. The spatial sweep of the disorder confronting the major powers in the wake of the war was vast' (Tooze, 2015 p.21).

As the *George Washington* set sail it was passed by a shipload of American troops returning home from the battlefields of the Great War. It was rather ironic that the President who wanted to step up American intervention in Europe was heading in one direction while the dead and wounded were being brought back home in the other. The psychological impact on the American public of seeing the wounded and the dead brought back home was immense. Even though the United States had not joined the war until April 1917, almost three years after the fighting in Europe had started, more than 115,000 American troops were killed before the war was brought to a close. Wilson's preoccupation with Europe may have led him to underestimate the increasing desire for isolationism in America. However, the high casualty figures were enough to convince many Americans that they should never again become involved in a European conflict.

To make matters worse, Wilson had caused a political storm when he made clear that his diplomatic team in Paris would not include any members of the Senate and would only contain one member of the Republican Party. Wilson had ignored the convention of consultation with the Senate and had made powerful enemies who were eager for revenge when he returned to Washington in July 1919. Wilson arrived in December 1918 to a hero's welcome. The French people made their gratitude to America clear but it was also apparent that they expected the American President to support them in their desire for revenge. Indeed the choice of Paris as a venue for the peace conference seemed solely designed to heighten anti-German sympathies. Wilson's steadfast refusal to commit himself to the French point of view highlighted the fact that there was a substantial difference between the French with their desire for revenge and the Americans who stood for a more abstract 'Peace without victory'. The polarity of these positions meant that the stance adopted by Britain would be absolutely vital. The importance of public opinion in influencing politicians was heightened by the fact that a general election was being fought in December 1918. It was difficult for any politician to resist climbing onto the popular bandwagon of 'Hang the Kaiser' and 'Make Germany Pay' which was being whipped up by the popular press in the build-up to the election at home and peace conference in Paris.

(a) The Versailles settlement: A bitter peace

The preliminary peace conference was opened at the French Foreign Ministry in the Quai d'Orsay on 18 January 1919 and concluded when the peace terms were presented to the German delegation on 7 May. The conference was unprecedented in its global scale. Although thirty-two states were officially represented, the whole conference only came together six times. Ultimately the talks were dominated by the 'Big Four': President Wilson of the United States, Prime Minister Lloyd-George of Great Britain, Premier Clemenceau of France and Prime Minister Orlando of Italy. Much of the historical verdict on the manner in which negotiations were carried out has been critical. Sally Marks describes how the big four 'proceeded in slipshod fashion without agenda, minutes, or any record of decisions until the secretary of the British delegation, the supremely efficient Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey, insinuated himself into their midst and rescued them from disaster. Even then, the agenda darted from topic to topic, and the big four were startlingly erratic in either accepting, ignoring or rejecting expert reports' (Marks, 1976 p.9).

The range of problems facing the main protagonists was immense but the range of agreement was narrow. Relations between Wilson, Lloyd-George and Clemenceau began coolly and got worse. Clemenceau, nick-named 'the Tiger' and with a fearsome appearance that matched his reputation, soon made it clear that he was not impressed by Wilson's idealism: 'God gave us Ten Commandments and we broke them, Wilson gave us the Fourteen Points. We shall see'. On another occasion Clemenceau asked: 'How can I talk to a fellow who thinks himself the first man for two thousand years who has known anything about peace on earth?' Wilson soon began to feel the strain of dealing with Clemenceau and fell ill in early April. Clemenceau was scarcely able to conceal his delight, telling Lloyd-George, 'He is worse today', before doubling up with laughter. Clemenceau showed that his ill-feeling was not confined to Wilson when, after a heated debate, he threatened to assault Lloyd-George. An assassination attempt on Clemenceau that left the 78-year-old premier with a grazed lung added to the morbid atmosphere that seems to have characterized the conference (Traynor, 1991 p.107).

It is when this personal animosity is set against the background of the range of technical problems which were faced that the shortcomings of the conference can be most easily understood. The historian A. Lentin in his book *Guilt at Versailles* highlights the practical problems encountered by Wilson in seeking to implement the worthy ideal of national self-determination. 'He was ignorant, when he promised Italy the South Tyrol, that its population was Austrian. When he approved the boundaries of Czechoslovakia, he had no idea that they contained three million Germans. When he assented to the incorporation of Transylvania within Romania, he was unware of sanctioning an act of annexation' (Lentin, 1985 p.75).

Ultimately the complexities of the problem were pushed aside in order to produce a finished treaty. After four months of argument the treaty was hurriedly brought together at the end of April. When it was rushed to the printers at the beginning of May nobody had read the document – with its 440 clauses and more than 200 pages – in full or obtained a clear idea of its overall stance. The treaty was presented to the Germans, essentially in the form of an ultimatum, at a tense ceremony on 7 May 1919. It was made clear to Germany that refusal to sign the treaty would mean that they would once again be at war. It was hard for the Germans to see any common ground between the fourteen points and the severity of the new treaty. In a terse speech the head of the German delegation, Brockdorff-Rantzau, set the tone of bitterness and resentment which were to characterize the German response. 'We are under no illusions as to the extent of our defeat and the degree of our powerlessness' (Lentin, 1985 p.85).

Germany's outspoken resentment at the manner in which the terms had been dictated to them only served to harden the position on both sides and the only amendments made to the treaty were minor ones. On 28 June 1919 the conference finally came to an end when

the Germans signed the treaty in the Hall of Mirrors in the glittering Palace of Versailles. The very room that had been the scene of the Germany's unification and triumphant victory over France in 1871 now symbolized national humiliation. The fate of Germany had been decided and when the terms were made public they dismayed the German nation.

(b) Some key terms of the Versailles Peace Treaty

Article 42: Germany is not to maintain or construct any fortifications either on the left bank of the Rhine or on the right bank of the west of a line drawn 50 kilometres to the east.

Article 45: As compensation for the destruction of the coal mines in the north of France, and as part payment towards the total reparations due, Germany gives to France the coal mines of the Saar. At the end of fifteen years, its inhabitants shall be asked under which government they wish to be placed.

Article 80: Germany acknowledges and will respect strictly the independence of Austria … she agrees that this independence will be inalienable.

Article 102: The Principal Allied and Associated Powers undertake to establish the town of Danzig … as a Free City. It will be placed under the protection of the League of Nations.

Article 119: Germany renounces in favour of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all her rights and titles over her overseas possessions.

Article 160: By a date not later than 31 March 1920, the German army must not consist of more than seven divisions of infantry and three of cavalry (i.e. not more than 100,000 men)

Article 231: The Allied governments affirm, and Germany accepts, the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied governments and their peoples have been subjected as a result of the war.

Article 232: The Allied governments recognize that the resources of Germany are not adequate to make complete reparation for all such loss and damage … But they require, and Germany undertakes, that she will make compensation for all the damage done to the civilian population of the Allied powers and to their property during the war.

Article 428: As a guarantee that the treaty shall be carried out, the German territory to the west of the Rhine will be occupied by … Allied troops for fifteen years.

It is not hard to find contemporary criticism of the treaty. John Maynard Keynes, a distinguished economist who resigned from the British delegation when he realized the likely outcome, offered scathing observations in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace.*

> The future life of Europe was not their concern: its means of livelihood was not their anxiety. Their preoccupations, good and bad alike related to frontiers and

nationalities, to the balance of power, to imperial aggrandisements, to the future enfeeblement of a strong and dangerous enemy, to revenge, and to the shifting by the victors of their unbearable financial burdens on to the shoulders of the defeated.

(Traynor, 1991 p.110)

What of the verdict of historians? Adam Lentin observes,

It was a wise precept of Machiavelli that the victor should either conciliate his enemy or destroy him. The Treaty of Versailles did neither. It did not pacify Germany, still less permanently weaken her, appearances notwithstanding, but left her scourged, humiliated and resentful. It was neither a Wilson peace nor a Clemenceau peace, but a witches' brew concocted of the least palatable ingredients of each which, though highly distasteful to Germany, were by no means fatal.

(Lentin, 1985 p.132)

William Carr believes that:

Severe as the Treaty of Versailles seemed to many Germans, it should be remembered that Germany might easily have fared much worse. If Clemenceau had had his way, instead of being restrained by Britain and America, the Rhineland would have become an independent state, the Saarland would have been annexed to France and Danzig would have become an integral part of Poland … However, the Germans as a nation were not inclined to count their blessings in 1919 … Most of all they resented the moral stigma of sole war-guilt which they did not feel … Finally, the fact that the treaty was not negotiated but dictated to Germany and signed in humiliating circumstances made it certain that the German people would accept no responsibility for its fulfilment. To the discerning it was clear from the beginning that the Versailles settlement would last only as long as the victorious powers were in a position to enforce it on a bitterly resentful people.

(Carr, 1991 p.261–2)

Gary Sheffield's verdict is that 'The war was won but subsequently the peace was lost. It would take a second, even more destructive war to do away with the German threat' (BBC, 2018 p.12).

The bleak mood at Versailles followed President Wilson home like a cloud. By the time he left France in late June 1919, the euphoria of his arrival six months earlier must truly have seemed a distant memory. Meanwhile, his political enemies were gathering. The Constitution made clear that America could only join the League of Nations if the Senate gave its formal approval. But Wilson's failure to properly consult the Senate before he went to Paris had not been forgotten or forgiven. In the Senate, a group known as the Irreconcilables had been formed under the leadership of Senator Borah. As their name suggested, this group rejected American membership of the proposed league under any circumstances. A second, more moderate group of Senators led by Henry Cabot Lodge urged Wilson to strike out Article 10 of the Covenant before they would sign. Yet Wilson's capacity for compromise had never been part of his skill set. Predictably, but as it would turn out, fatally, he ruled out any compromise and decided to tour the United States seeking popular support in place of the political backing which he had been denied. Making no concessions either, to his recent ill health, the schedule, with hindsight looks reckless to say the least. Over three long weeks, he would cover 8,000 miles, enduring searing temperatures, long train journeys and then attempting to speak to large audiences with often rudimentary amplification. In Oakland, California, Wilson pointed to 'The little

children who [seem] to be my real clients,' because unless the League works, 'there will be another and final war just about the time these children come to maturity.' A few days later speaking in San Diego, Wilson declared that 'the great heart of humanity beats in this document … I know, if by any chance, we should not win this great fight for the League of Nations, it would mean their death warrant.' They would have to fight 'that final war' in which the 'very existence of civilization would be in the balance' (J. M. Cooper, Jr, 2011 p.527).

By the early autumn of 1919, the strain of this schedule upon Wilson's health became clear. In what would be the last extended speech of his life, in Pueblo, Colorado, Wilson evoked, 'the truth of justice and of liberty and of peace. We have accepted that truth, and we are going to be led by it, and it is going to lead us, and, through us, the world out into the pastures of quietness and peace such as the world has never dreamed of before' (Cooper, 2011 p.529). Within hours the President's health collapsed and it became clear to his doctor that there was no alternative but to return to Washington. Within days he suffered a massive stroke. It could have killed him but instead, confined to his sick-bed, Wilson's hallmark determination and stubbornness returned to the fore. Unable to compromise, his opponents were able to take advantage and strike down his treaty in the Senate in a final, decisive vote in March 1920. The world's strongest nation had, for the time being at least, turned its back on Europe. The consequences would be huge. Meanwhile, in the Europe he left behind, tangled issues remained unresolved.

(c) The Bitter Peace in eastern Europe

The leading statesmen were worn out by their collective efforts at Versailles and departed the scene as quickly as they could, leaving the completion of the remaining treaties to a raft of diplomats and civil servants. At their core, each of these treaties incorporated the League Covenant and disarmament clauses, reparations schedules and economic regulations similar to those laboriously drawn up in Paris. Their work can be summarized as follows:

(d) Austria – The Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye (September 1919)

Austria's key role as Germany's foremost ally was reflected in the severe settlement that followed. Austria was severed from Hungary and reduced to a small rump state, land-locked and with almost a third of its population concentrated in Vienna. The rest of the population was scattered across relatively unproductive Alpine regions. Much of Austria's wealthiest territory was taken away to create the Czech portions of the newly formed Czechoslovakia. Galicia went to Poland. Italy received the Istrian peninsula, Trentino and the South Tyrol. The Bukovina region went to Romania. Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Dalmatian Coast went to the newly formed Yugoslavia. Austria's beautiful, historic capital remained but the economic resources it had previously drawn upon had been removed.

(e) Hungary – The Treaty of Trianon (June 1920)

Hungary's fate was similar to Austria but with losses even more severe. Slovakia and Ruthenia were handed to Czechoslovakia. Croatia, Slavonia and part of the Banat were given to Romania. Hungary also gave up Fiume its last remaining outlet to the sea but this became the subject of a dispute between Italy and the other powers.

(f) Bulgaria – The Treaty of Neuilly (November 1919)

In the context of Austria–Hungary, it could be argued that Bulgaria's territorial losses were relatively lenient. Western Thrace went to Greece and Southern Dobruja was handed to Romania. Several of Bulgaria's border areas went to Yugoslavia while access to the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean was surrendered. The treaty also stipulated that Bulgaria's reparations debt should be set at £90 million to be paid across a period of almost forty years.

(g) Turkey – Treaty of Sèvres

The strategic straits from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean were opened in peace and war to the merchant and war ships of all nations, and control of the straits was handed to an international commission. Turkey gave up all rights in the Sudan and Libya and recognized French protectorates in Monaco and Tunisia. Other obligations included recognition of the British protectorate in Egypt. The Hedjaz (henceforth Saudi Arabia) became an independent kingdom. Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia became mandated territories under the control of the major powers. It should be noted that mandate was a new term which was applied to former Turkish and Greek colonies which were now transferred to the victors under the nominal authority of the League of Nations.

3.4 THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

At first glance the notion of a new international community humbled by the sacrifice of war and moving to a new system of openness and morality at the expense of arms races and secret treaties seemed almost universally attractive. However, the historical perspective offered here by Adam Lentin is less generous: 'The mirage of the League of Nations as an entity somehow different from the erring states which composed it, the myth of the actual efficacy of peaceful aspirations, was to prove among the most infectious and tenacious of the illusions born of the Peace Conference.'

(a) Strengths of the League of Nations

The Covenant of the League of Nations created an Assembly for all member nations, a Council which was firmly in the hands of the great powers, a Secretariat to administer their work so that in purely administrative terms, the League had a clearly defined organization. Twenty-four nations, including Great Britain and France, had created a new organization instilling a genuine sense of co-operation among the new members. The League stood to defend the interests of all member states, not just the smaller ones. It appeared, in the first instance, that the aims of the League enjoyed widespread support. It seemed to represent a revolutionary step forward in international relations, away from the old, pre-war alliance system and arms race. Furthermore, the League proposed to undertake a wide range of humanitarian and economic activities. Finally, what could be seen as a long-lasting success the Permanent Court of International Justice would eventually be based in The Hague. While most historians remain critical of the League, Niall Ferguson offers an alternative view: 'Despite its poor historical reputation, the League of Nations should not be dismissed as a complete failure. Of sixty-six international disputes it had to deal with (four of which had led to open hostilities) it successfully resolved thirty-five and quite legitimately passed back twenty to the channels of traditional diplomacy. It failed to resolve just eleven conflicts' (Ferguson, 2006 p.301).

(b) Early Successes

In 1920 the Health Organisation of the League organized medical assistance and the distribution of vaccines to combat the widespread epidemics of typhus, cholera and dysentery which swept across the most war-weary parts of Europe. The early prospects of the League to wage peace were put to the test in 1921 when a dispute arose between Sweden and Finland over the Aaland Islands in the Baltic. When the League ruled in favour of Finland, the Swedes accepted the settlement in the face of international opinion.

(c) Weaknesses of the League

The central weaknesses of the new organization have long been clear. Firstly, the League never really recovered from America's decision not to join. Once the Senate turned its back on meaningful international commitments the League looked and acted like a hollow vessel. Secondly, the unanimity clause at the centre of its constitution turned out to be a recipe for in-action. Thirdly, the League had no armed forces of its own to deploy. Furthermore, key members such as Britain and France were not as powerful, militarily or economically, as they had once been. While membership of the League remained predominantly European, the shift in real power towards countries like Japan and the United States had not yet been recognized. Some of the most enthusiastic members were the smaller European countries, which could do little themselves to actually enforce peace, but relied on the larger powers for their own protection. Certain countries, particularly in the near future such as Italy and Germany, would become increasingly hostile towards the whole peace settlement. As Hugh Brogan states, 'the League depended on the goodwill of the nations to work, though it was the absence of goodwill that made it necessary.'

In the brutal international climate that lay ahead, particularly in the 1930s this display of weakness made the organization appear utterly impotent. These weaknesses, combined, meant that the idealistic notion of collective security without any visible means of enforcement was doomed to failure. Sally Marks highlights the fragile nature of the peace:

> The peacemakers had not only assumed that they could agree upon the implementations of their treaties. They had also assumed that the affected peoples would abide by their decisions. Yet several nations, including Poland, Turkey, Hungary and above all, Germany, would not. During 1920 the peacemakers completed their peace treaties, and the elaborate optimistic structure of commissions to carry them out came into being. Yet the French at least were painfully aware that winning the peace would prove as arduous as winning the war. The battle was joined without delay
>
> (Marks, 1976 p25)

Margaret Macmillan is scathing in her verdict:

> Only a handful of eccentric historians still bother to study the League of Nations. Its archives, with their wealth of materials, are largely unvisited. Its very name evokes images of earnest bureaucrats, fuzzy liberal supporters, futile resolutions, unproductive fact-finding missions and, above all, failure: Manchuria in 1931, Ethiopia in 1935 and, most catastrophic of all, the outbreak of the Second World War a mere twenty years after the first one had ended. The dynamic leaders of the inter-war

years – Mussolini, Hitler, the Japanese militarists – sneered at the League and ultimately turned their backs on it. Its chief supporters – Britain, France and the smaller democracies – were lukewarm and flaccid … The League was officially pronounced dead in 1946. It had ceased to count at all in 1939.

(Macmillan, 2014 p.92)

Sally Marks is equally critical:

In most respects the League of Nations was a European club, dominated by European statesmen, European assumptions, and European issues most of the time. Throughout the history of the League Japan was the only non-European state ever to hold a permanent seat on the Council, and in the early years Europe monopolised most of the non-permanent seats as well … Without exception the prominent figures in the halls of the League at Geneva were European. The great powers dominated, but the most conspicuous devotees of the League were the representatives of the smaller European states, especially those which had been beneficiaries of the peace settlement. These states, frightened of Russia or Germany or both, tended to cling to the League and to the illusion that it could protect them and their gains. They were the leading champions of collective security, secure in the knowledge that their smallness ensured that they would never be called upon to provide it.

(Marks, 1976 p.29–30)

It also seems fair to say that some great events, often brutal in their scale, seemed to lie far beyond the world of genteel summits and traditional diplomacy.

3.5 THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR (1918–21)

In the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) Lenin accepted stringent terms from Germany in order to concentrate on the danger within the forces of the right. The offensive Lenin anticipated was launched by the Whites, with the assistance of the Allied powers, in the summer of 1918. The key White generals were Kornilov, Krasnov, Denikin and Yudenich. Their forces were swelled by Allied troops and Finnish Whites. A further problem came from around 30,000 Czech activists who, ironically, had been released from Russian prisons in May 1918. In the summer of 1918 they gained control of a large area west of the Urals. As these soldiers advanced on Ekaterinburg the Bolsheviks took the decision to murder the Tsar and his family. Initially the Whites enjoyed considerable success. Kulchak was victorious in Perm and Ufa and Denikin in Kharkov and Kyiv. Indeed, Denikin and Yudenich came close to Moscow and Petrograd respectively. The situation was so grave that at one stage the Bolsheviks seriously considered a retreat from Petrograd.

Trotsky's role in reversing the situation was absolutely crucial. It was Trotsky, as commissar for war, who created the new Red Army. Following the introduction of conscription in May 1918, the army compromised 500,000 men in April 1919 and 5 million by June 1920. This was rigidly controlled from Moscow. Trotsky astutely recruited almost 50,000 ex-tsarist officers to serve in the Red Army. Strict discipline and the use of firing squads encouraged the army to be cohesive and well-organized. Trotsky was given a free hand in running the Red Army; this can be seen in the way he prevailed upon Lenin to recall Stalin to Moscow following a personal dispute. The Bolsheviks' unity of purpose, clear ideological motivation and Trotsky's dynamic leadership meant that by 1920 the three main White offensives had been repelled. In the face of impending defeat, the war

weary Allies withdrew their support and resources. The Civil War was over. Why had the Bolsheviks been successful?

- The states of Latvia, Estonia and Finland would have lent their support to the counter-revolutionary forces but they were deterred by the Whites' refusal to recognize their independence.
- The White forces lacked a cohesive base. They were scattered all over Russia and this made concerted action difficult. By contrast, the Bolsheviks never lost control of Moscow and Petrograd.
- The Allied powers were weak and war-weary, and once the Whites suffered reverses they were reluctant to carry on.
- The Whites had no single leader with a force of personality equal to that of Lenin or Trotsky. They did not have a unified set of aims and were politically divided.
- The peasantry supported the Reds: a vital factor.

3.6 AN UNEASY PEACE

German resentment did not abate once the peacemakers had departed Versailles. In January 1921 the economic terms imposed upon Germany became clear. The final figure was an eye-watering 226 thousand million Gold Marks to be paid in war debts. It did not take long for those operating on the extremes of German politics to realize that here was a target for a sustained campaign of hatred and revenge. Within days, 'the transfixing far-right agitator' (Kotkin, 2017 p.xiv). Adolf Hitler attracted an audience exceeding 6,000 people, to hear him speak on 'Future or Ruin' and denounce the 'slavery' that the Allied reparations entailed (Kershaw, 1998 p.157). The reparations issue would run like a thread through international relations in the 1920s but it was not the only issue that remained from the Great War and the associated peace.

(a) The Washington Conference (1921–2)

Many accounts have portrayed the Senate's rejection of the Versailles Treaty as a permanent marker of debilitating American isolationism. However, the United States briefly returned to the international fold between November 1921 and February 1922. This conference centred on the issue of naval disarmament particularly in relation to the Pacific and the Far East. The United States was increasingly concerned with Japan's rising prowess in this area. In February 1922 the major powers signed a Five-power treaty which was broadly in line with American wishes. Naval tonnage for capital ships was limited to 525,000 for Britain and the United States, 300,000 for Japan and 175,000 for France and Italy. In the Far East, America and Canada were eager to see Britain distance herself from her pre-war alliance with Japan. In addition, it was intended to relieve China of some of the more pressing demands made of her by Japan in 1915. The Nine-power pact affirmed, though with no commitment to uphold and defend, the territorial integrity of China, endorsing the important notion of the 'Open Door' through which all nations could trade with China on an equal basis. While the hope was that this agreement could mark an end to the damaging naval arms races and expansionism of the past, this rested on the assumption that all nations would indefinitely abide by the agreed terms, regardless of their changing status, ambitions and most importantly their future leaders. Adam Tooze sees the Washington Conference as marking a

> global order defined by America in unprecedentedly stark terms … power was measured in the currency of battleships … There would be none of the ambiguity

of Versailles … At the head stood Britain and the United States, who were accorded equal status as the only truly global powers with a naval presence throughout the high seas. Japan was granted third spot as a one-ocean power confined to the Pacific … Germany and Russia were not even considered as conference participants.

(Tooze, 2014 p11)

(b) The Genoa Conference (April–May 1922)

Since Lenin's Bolshevik revolution in late 1917 Russia had been completely isolated in international terms, other than those nations who took sides in the Russian Civil War. The Allies ostentatiously refused to invite Russia to the Versailles Conference and in return Lenin had repudiated obligations to pay Tsarist war debts. This meeting marked the limited re-admission of Russia into the international community. With relations at rock bottom, Lloyd-George hoped to use the Genoa summit to restore some sort of relationship. France remained insistent that Russia should honour her war debts. In return, the Russians lobbied for reparations against those who had intervened in their Civil War. This one event can be seen, therefore, to illustrate the lack of agreement that dogged the international community in general, and the League of Nations in particular.

(c) The Rapallo Treaty (April 1922)

While the leading European powers were still in Genoa, it was announced that Germany and Russia had reached their own agreement, close to Genoa itself, at Rapallo. The Genoa Conference had seen the limited re-admission of Russia into the international community. Russia had faced total isolation following the Bolshevik takeover of October/November 1917. Russia, despite its massive contribution to the Entente's war-effort, and huge material sacrifice, was not even invited to the Versailles Conference. Lenin's refusal to engage with the issue of tsarist war debts only worsened relations. Germany watched these developments with keen interest and by the early 1920s began to re-engage with Russia. A secret Russo-German military collaboration in 1921 was followed by a fruitful meeting at Rapallo, coinciding with the Genoa meeting. It was now announced that the German and Soviet governments had resumed diplomatic relations and pledged their future cooperation. This was only the start. What followed was a further indication of how secrecy, armaments and mutual suspicion had still not been removed from the international community.

As Sally Marks explains,

> On the Russian plains, far from the prying eyes of military control commissions, Germany could and did build factories, produce the airplanes, poison gases, and tanks forbidden by the Versailles Treaty, test them, and train military personnel, both German and Russian, in their use. While this mutually beneficial arrangement had its ups and downs, it flourished throughout the twenties and to a lesser degree until the advent of Hitler.
>
> (Marks, 1976 p.64 & 74)

(d) The Geneva Protocol (October 1924)

The weaknesses of the League did not take long to become clear so starting in 1923, two attempts were made to bolster its authority and see genuine progress on security and

disarmament. The Draft Treat of Mutual Assistance was presented to the League Assembly in September 1923. It proposed that all members would come to the assistance of any victim of aggression. This was rejected by Britain but a further proposal, the Geneva Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes was put forward in 1924. This offered compulsory arbitration in all disputes. However, once again this failed to secure British approval and was formally rejected in 1925.

(e) The Locarno Conference (1925)

The apparent willingness of German Foreign Secretary Gustav Stresemann to engage led to a major conference in the picturesque Swiss town of Locarno in October 1925. Ostensibly, the resulting Locarno Pact seemed to herald a major breakthrough in international relations. Most notably:

- The Rhineland Pact. Crucially, both Germany and France, alongside Belgium, agreed to respect their mutual frontiers, recognizing them as permanent and including within this, the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland. Britain and Italy signed up as guarantors to the Pact.
- It was agreed that French troops would complete their withdrawal from the Ruhr.
- A Treaty of Arbitration between France and Germany provided for the settlement of all future disputes through the League of Nations.
- Plans were made for the ground-breaking admission of Germany to the League of Nations which came to fruition in 1926.

While these positive features sparked euphoria the perception of historians has been much less enthusiastic. Sally Marks has gone so far as to say that ‘no man in the Weimar Republic did more to destroy the Versailles Treaty than Stresemann’. The fact was that Germany was already in breach of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles settlement through her secret military cooperation with Russia. Marks believes that ‘the real spirit at Locarno behind the façade of public fellowship was one of bitter confrontation between a fearful France and a bitter Germany’. (Marks, 1976 p. 64 & 74) Nevertheless, further optimism stemmed from the events of 1928.

(f) The Kellogg-Briand Pact (August 1928)

No less than fifteen nations signed the grandly named International Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy in Paris in August 1928. Subsequently, thirty-one nations added their endorsement. In just two paragraphs, the declaration proclaimed that the signatories would resolve future disputes only through peaceful dialogue. Optimism greeted the high-profile arrival of US Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg to add his signature to that of Aristide Briand, his French equivalent. In practice, countries remained free to exercise self-defence and to fulfil their treaty obligations. More importantly, any notion that America was ready to re-join the international fold was to prove short-lived. In October 1929 the Wall Street Crash and the catastrophic Great Depression that followed mean that the United States was once again about to withdraw, to a significant extent, from the international scene. It was yet another factor that would strengthen the position of the dictators who would emerge in the 1930s to threaten the already fragile international peace.

(g) Japanese expansionism (1931)

While we have noted the Eurocentric nature of the League of Nations, it could be claimed that it was in the Far East that the organization began its demise. By 1930 it was clear that democracy in Japan was under duress. The military, in particular a group of aggressive generals in the Kwantung Army (an army group of the Imperial Japanese Army) supported by intensely patriotic societies such as the Cherry Blossom Society, believed that territorial expansion was vital to the Japanese economy and sense of national pride. Their target was to turn neighbouring Manchuria into a Japanese satellite state at the expense of China. In September 1931 an explosion on the railway line outside Mukden was used as a pretext for the Kwantung Army to send its troops into Manchuria in pursuit of what they termed 'Chinese bandits.' Inside the American government, President Hoover was urged to take action but in the middle of his own deepening economic crisis he was worried that sanctions could be a slippery slope towards war. The League decided to create a Commission of Inquiry led by the distinguished diplomat, Lord Lytton. Following a protracted fact-finding mission, Lord Lytton's report was not forthcoming until January 1933. The report failed to issue a complete condemnation of Japan's actions but at the same time its refusal to recognize the state of Manchukuo (the state of Manchuria) prompted Japan to withdraw from the League of Nations altogether. The conclusions were clear. Military force had prevailed over diplomatic reason. The United States had failed to engage in a decisive way. The international community appeared toothless and Japan, the first government to openly defy the League, believed it could act without further outside interference. We will now examine how, above and beyond military matters, economic issues were also of crucial importance in undermining the fragile peace.

(h) Economic collapse

Europe and the wider world's economic fortunes were now inextricably linked and it would also become clear that economic upheaval was the enemy of peace and democracy. The issue of finance was central at the Versailles Conference and remained of crucial importance through the decade that followed. When the Treaty was signed in June 1918, Germany was obliged to pay reparations to the victors, but the exact figure was not agreed at the conference.

(i) London conference (March 1921)

The Allies planned to resolve the reparations issue at the London summit but instead Germany asked for a significant scaling-back of the reparations figure offered by the Allies at the start of the year. The old enmities remained close to the surface and angered by the 'conditions' set out by the Germans, the Allies took the significant step of occupying three towns in the Ruhr, based on their claim that Germany had already defaulted on an interim payment.

(j) The Reparations Commission (April 1921)

Shortly after the London meeting it was announced that the total bill faced by Germany would amount to £6,600 million (132 billion marks) to be paid annually at a rate of £100 million, with further payments equivalent to the value of ¼ of all German exports.

(k) The Occupation of the Ruhr (January 1923)

As 1922 began it seemed clear that Germany would have to default on its payments. While the Reparations Commission was ready to offer relief on the initial payments the feeling in France was rather that Germany could afford to pay but simply did not want to. French suspicion was further fuelled by the Treaty of Rapallo which indicated a worrying trend of cooperation between Germany and Russia. The reparations problem rolled on into January 1923 when the Paris Conference stated that Germany had deliberately defaulted over deliveries of coal. Within days, French and Belgian troops were sent into the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland. The occupation of the Ruhr and Germany's policy of 'passive resistance' had a devastating impact on the German economy leading to the most catastrophic inflation in its history. Within the year the level of the US dollar against the German currency moved from being worth 18,000 marks to a staggering 4 billion marks. It was only when the newly appointed Chancellor Gustav Stresemann called off passive resistance and introduced a new currency, the Rentenmark, that some stability was restored.

(l) The Dawes Plan (April 1924)

Further signs of stability were provided in late spring 1924. The Dawes Plan for the settlement of reparations was published following four months of intense scrutiny by the committee led by a respected American general. While the total liability figure remained unchanged the plan represented an important shift in terms of the recognition of what was reasonable and realistic based on Germany's capacity to pay. For the first five years Germany would make payments gradually increasing from £50 million to £125 million. From that point, payments would be based on an index of German prosperity. As foreign minister, Stresemann had reached what looked like a reasonable settlement, due in large part to Britain and America's shared desire for economic and political stability. However, William Carr makes it clear that 'Stresemann did not believe in the Dawes Plan; in private he referred to it as "no more than an economic armistice" in the rivalry between France and Germany. The Plan was accepted simply in order to secure the foreign loans without which economic recovery was impossible' (Carr, 1991 p.284). Over and above Stresemann's intentions, the Dawes Plan was a key factor in a period of relative stability that lasted until 1929.

(m) The Young Plan

Led by American financier, Owen Young, the Allied Reparations Commission proposed a new plan to settle German war reparations. The new proposal offered a reduced final figure, although Germany would still face substantial payments for a further sixty years, ending in 1988. Furthermore, the Reparations Commission would be dissolved, a new Bank of International Settlement established in Switzerland, while British and French troops would withdraw from the Rhineland. Despite what looked like a reasonable proposal, Stresemann faced a crescendo of criticism from the far-right – a group whose influence was shortly to become much more pronounced. They contended that future generations of Germans were being saddled with debt. Wearied by the criticism and by his sustained efforts, Stresemann died suddenly at the start of October. It was an ominous sign. Before the month was over, the stock market crash in the United States signified the start of a Great Depression which brought unprecedented economic and political consequences, not just for Germany but on a global scale. This probably marked the start of what is often called the Road to War.

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Chapter

4 The road to war

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

While there was a widespread desire for peace after the trauma of the Great War, it is now clear to historians that the international order in the period 1919–39 was in fact highly vulnerable. Although it would be possible to associate the 1920s with the 'spirit of Locarno' and the League of Nations, before that decade was over, international stresses became apparent. The collapse of the global economy that began in 1929 and marked the onset of the Great Depression reminds us that economic forces were hugely important in destabilizing the world order. While democratic systems ultimately prevailed in the United States and the UK, other powerful nations resorted to positions of aggression and extreme nationalism with calamitous results.

A sign of what was to come came with the first major act of aggression of the 1930s which was committed by Japan, with the invasion of the eastern part of China, known as Manchuria, in 1931. The obvious failure of the League of Nations to deal with this blatant breach of international law did not go unnoticed. In Europe, Hitler's regime in Germany appeared to represent a further threat to world peace. Hitler had begun a programme of rearmament in 1933 and formally announced the reintroduction of conscription in March 1935. Briefly, Britain, France and Italy appeared to adopt a united front in the stand against international aggression. Meeting at Stresa in northern Italy, in April 1935 they were critical of Hitler's actions, while a month later, the French signed a treaty of mutual assistance with the USSR.

The long-term prospects of a united front were soon dashed when the British, without consulting France or Italy signed a unilateral agreement with Germany, the *Anglo-German Naval Agreement.* This damaging step effectively acknowledged the principle that Germany could rearm, despite the clauses explicitly forbidding this in the Treaty of Versailles. In Italy, the lesson learnt from this process was that countries could act alone and ignore international law. Since 1922, Italy had been in the hands of a Fascist regime led by Benito Mussolini. His aggressive ideology and conviction that the Western powers would only stand-by led to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935. While Italy's actions were completely reprehensible, once again, the international community appeared weak and lacking moral leadership,

Emboldened by the demise of the League, Hitler again breached the Versailles Treaty by sending German troops into the demilitarized Rhineland in March 1936. Britain and France protested but no direct military action to deter Hitler was forthcoming. By now, the links between the two Fascist nations of Germany and Italy were becoming stronger. This was marked by the creation of the *Rome-Berlin Axis* in October 1936. Hitler quickly followed this with the creation of the *Anti-Comintern Pact*, signed with Japan. Meanwhile in Spain in 1936 a Civil War broke out between the right-wing Nationalist movement and the left-wing Republican government. Mussolini and Hitler offered direct support to the Nationalist leader, General Franco. Britain and France remained on the side-lines, while

the Soviet Union led by Stalin offered support to the Republicans. The war in Spain lasted until 1939, when General Franco finally emerged victorious.

A reminder that global, not just European forces were at work came in 1937 when Japan's militaristic regime launched a full-scale invasion of northern China. The resulting Sino-Japanese War meant that the global conflict which many Western authorities have dated to September 1939 in fact began as early as 1937. Once again, Hitler took encouragement from these events and stepped up the pace of his own foreign policy programme. In March 1938 Germany carried out the process of *Anschluss,* which marked the union of Germany with Austria, even though this was strictly forbidden under the terms of the Versailles Treaty. Hitler then turned his attention to a region of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland, which contained more than 3 million Germans. Desperate to avoid war, the UK, under the leadership of Neville Chamberlain, had now embarked upon a policy of appeasement with Germany. Chamberlain used a policy of negotiation with Hitler which culminated in the Munich Conference of September 1938. Without the consent of Czechoslovakia, the Western powers signed an agreement transferring the Sudetenland to Germany.

Chamberlain believed the Munich agreement would mark the end of Hitler's demands but he was wrong. In March 1939, German troops forcibly occupied Prague, the Czech capital. This marked a turning point when it became clear to even the most ardent advocates of appeasement that Hitler could not be trusted and would only be stopped by the application of force. Hitler claimed that his final demand would be for the Poles to hand over the city of Danzig. When Britain and France insisted that they would stand by the Poles in resisting Germany's demands, Hitler insisted to his generals that the west was fundamentally weak and would ultimately desert Poland. A grave international situation became even worse with the extraordinary announcement in August 1939 that Stalin's communist regime in the Soviet Union had signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. This paved the way for Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. When Britain and France declared war on Germany the war which had begun in Asia now spread to Europe.

4.1 INTRODUCTION: THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC CRASH ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

As the roaring twenties came to an end, the rise of the United States as the 'main well-spring of global finance' (Todman, 2016 p.21) looked set to continue unchecked. Everything changed in October 1929. The severity of the economic crash meant that when President Roosevelt entered the White House in March 1933 it seemed likely that his term in office would be focused almost entirely on pressing domestic issues. The Great Depression had effectively brought the US economy to its knees. A sharp reduction in American lending, the consequent lack of credit, reductions in investment and consumption, combined, until the spectre of mass unemployment spread like a virus through the world economy. The economic crisis also caused a global political malaise, with repercussions way beyond the realms of high finance and Wall Street. In capitals as significant as Tokyo, Rome and Berlin, regimes which emphasized militaristic values and rejected peaceful liberal traditions increasingly prevailed. And without the counter-balance of the direct influence of the United States the international arena became steadily less secure.

As Todman explains: 'The economic collapse which caused the Great Depression was inter-twined with a global security crisis rooted in anticipation and apprehension of another worldwide war' (Todman, 2016 p.61). The sense of crisis was not just a trend in

international affairs. It was felt by individual people. Paul Kennedy's landmark text *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* reminds us that by no means all frontline soldiers who survived the First World War reflected on its futility. Rather, to

> hundreds of thousands … across the continent of Europe, disillusioned by the unemployment and inflation and boredom of the post-war bourgeois-dominated order, the conflict had represented something searing but positive: martial values, the camaraderie of warriors, the thrill of violence and action. To such groups, especially in the defeated nations of Germany and Hungary, and in the bitterly dissatisfied victor nation of Italy, but also among the French right, the ideas of the new fascist movements – of order, discipline and national glory … had great appeal.
>
> (Kennedy, 1999 p.285)

In fact, even before Roosevelt came to power, events in the Far East and Europe were already causing concern.

(a) Japan in the 1930s – 'The Dark Valley'

The global economic crisis of 1929–33 derailed Japan's island economy to such an extent that her foreign policy was set on a path from this point that would culminate in war with the United States. By 1931, crucial silk exports had collapsed, peasant farm income dropped by almost half compared to 1926, gold reserves poured out of Tokyo and the yen sharply depreciated. The slump made Japanese access to markets and sources of raw materials, particularly, oil and rubber, increasingly difficult. The crisis of capitalism may have spurred on Japan's communist neighbour, the Soviet Union, but this only added to a sense of urgency in Tokyo. At this crossroads, prospects for democratic reform gave way to a resurgence of militarism and authoritarianism. This transition was so clear cut that Japanese historians now refer to the period 1931–41 as 'the dark valley'. In 1930, Japanese militarists, patriots and young army officers founded the Cherry Blossom Society. The new organization advocated authoritarianism at home and an aggressive foreign policy, particularly towards near-neighbour, China. Most of all, the Japanese saw northern China as an area for expansion. In fact, Japanese business interests already held substantial interests in coalmines and iron ore deposits in Manchuria. To protect these interests Tokyo had established a major military presence – the Kwantung Army – in Manchuria. Now, the recently established Cherry Blossom Society was especially hostile towards the growing authority of the Chinese nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek.

When the foremost warlord in Manchuria recognized the nationalist government and did his best to obstruct Japan, the Kwantung Army decided to take action. In September 1931, Japanese troops seized Mukden, claiming that they were 'retaliating' against acts of 'sabotage' by Chinese troops against the Southern Manchurian railway. We now know that the alleged 'explosion' damaged just a few yards of track and did not even prevent the arrival of the next scheduled train! Even so, within an hour of the incident, Japan's Kwantung Army were murdering Chinese troops as they slept in their barracks, and seizing control of several other Chinese cities in what looked like a carefully orchestrated plan. These forces, operating outside the direct control of Tokyo, then moved further into Manchuria, in North-East China. From Japan's perspective the operation was highly impressive. Suffering only 3,000 fatalities, Japan had taken control of an industrial landscape bigger than Germany, France and Austria put together. In May 1933, the American Ambassador in Tokyo reported on the worrying size and

Map 4.1 **Japanese Expansion 1931–42**

sophistication of the Japanese fighting machine. However, it was very clear within the United States that public opinion did not support military action to quell the Japanese forces. The overall effect of American isolationism would be to fatally weaken the peace settlement. The scale of dislocation was so great that peace was threatened not just in Asia, but also in Europe.

(b) The Soviet Union

Japan's aggressive ideology and military activities were close enough to the Soviet Union to cause Josef Stalin serious concern. Since the revolution of October 1917, the Bolshevik regime had been largely ostracized by the Western European powers. To the ruling classes of Britain and the United States, the communist ideology was anathema. Even so, for many on the left, the Marxist experiment appeared radical and worthwhile, not least when the Soviet's controlled economy escaped the ravages of the capitalist depression. However, in the late 1920s, following Stalin's consolidation of power, the new Soviet dictator had embarked upon damaging policies of rural collectivization, deliberate imposition of famine as a means of punishment and control, and crash industrialization policies. One scholar estimates that between '1931–1933, famine and related epidemics probably killed between 5 and 7 million people. Perhaps 10 million more starved nearly to death' (Kotkin, 2017 p.127). By 1934, signs of a ferocious new era of repression were everywhere. The newly formed NKVD exerted a firm grip on internal affairs, heralding a domestic passport system, the use of terror and the promotion of dangerous young fanatics, such as Beria and Yezhov, from the secret state police to senior positions within the Bolshevik hierarchy.

All of these processes were in the hands of Stalin, cloistered in the Kremlin, in Moscow. Within the Imperial Senate building, Stalin had his own highly secure, 'special sector', equipped with its own concealed escape shaft. Stalin's paranoia about 'enemies of the state' from within was equally present on the international stage. He despised the global reach of 'imperialist' Britain and was wary of militaristic Japan. Above all, he feared the growing might of his sworn ideological enemy, Nazi Germany, not least when neighbouring Poland signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler, in January 1934. As the title of Kotkin's outstanding biography puts it, Stalin was 'Waiting for Hitler' (Kotkin, 2017). The Fascist threat prompted a massive rearmament programme. Kotkin summarizes the rapid transformation of the Soviet fighting machine: 'As of 1934, the Soviets possessed 3,500 tanks, as well as another 4,000 armored vehicles. Fighter planes of Soviet make and mobile artillery were also coming off assembly lines in numbers … Overall troop strength had grown from 586,000 in 1927 to nearly a million. The command staff was more educated, having completed courses at the many military academies' (Kotkin, 2017 p.188). Oleg V. Khlevniuk explains that:

> To understand the nature of Stalin and his regime it is important to keep in mind that the Soviet Union was born out of war … Having come to power solely through war, Bolshevik leaders always believed their power could be taken away by the coordinated efforts of a foreign enemy and domestic counter-revolutionary forces. War readiness, for them, had two aspects: a strong military economy and a secure homeland. The latter required destroying internal enemies.
>
> (Khlevniuk, 2015 p.153)

While the suffering of the Soviet people in the 1930s was immense, the capacity of their country to defend itself was being transformed. But this is not to say that the Soviets wanted or were ready for war when it finally came.

4.2 GERMANY AND THE REVISION OF THE VERSAILLES SETTLEMENT

While the new, isolationist president prepared for office, far away in Berlin, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933. His opponents believed they had surrounded him with conservative politicians who would limit his room for manoeuvre. But Hitler moved with astonishing speed to dismantle democracy and destroy his opponents. In addition, the international situation was exceptionally favourable for Germany in 1933. Even before the appointment of Hitler, the Versailles system was being dismantled and, at the Lausanne Conference in July 1932, reparations dramatically scaled back. Ostensibly, it could be argued that Hitler's anti-Versailles stance had much in common with the foreign policy of his immediate predecessors in the Weimar Republic. While the gradual erosion of the Versailles settlement was of general concern to the West, Hitler's foreign policy was ultimately much more problematic than those who came before him. Hitler made it clear in his book *Mein Kampf* that he was utterly committed to the reversal of the Versailles Treaty. German rearmament, the isolation of France, openness to diplomatic rapprochement with Great Britain, the reoccupation of the Rhineland, union between Germany and Austria, and the return of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and of previously German territory from Poland were all on Hitler's agenda.

(a) Hitler's Ideology and Foreign Policy

Beyond the list of individual countries and disputed territories, historians also now emphasize the importance of ideology in Hitler's thinking. The historiographical debate on Hitler's worldview and foreign policy remains intense. Zara Steiner remarks, 'It is with Hitler and Hitler's intentions, that any student of European international history must start' (Evans, 2015 p.251). Hitler sold to his followers the image that his ideas were forged in heroic fashion in the trenches of the Great War. But Thomas Weber's exhaustive investigation of this period in Hitler's life tells a very different story:

> piece by piece, the picture that has conclusively emerged by putting all the surviving pieces of evidence together is the image of a Private Hitler who was shunned by most of the front-line soldiers … and who was still unsure of his political ideology at the end of the war in 1918. The view of the List Regiment as a band of brothers, with Hitler a hero at its heart, has its origins in Nazi propaganda, not in reality. The First World War did not 'make' Hitler. Even the revolutionary period seems to have had a far less immediate impact on Hitler's politicization than hitherto assumed. Central for Hitler's radicalization was thus the post-revolutionary period … This period of Hitler's life is still clouded in much secrecy. His invented First World War (and his made-up revolutionary) experience was nevertheless of the utmost importance for Adolf Hitler. It became the focal point of his self-identity and for the propagandistic staging of his life story. (Weber, 2017 p.345)

In addition, Wolfram Pyta's original, insightful work offers new perspectives:

> Recent historical research has unmasked (Hitler's) public self-image of an ideologically entrenched, anti-Semite and radical nationalist, who stormed into politics in 1919 with such marching baggage, after a scrupulous examination of the manageable number of meaningful sources as a mirage. And also, for the long-held assumption that Hitler, if not in his Viennese apprenticeship years, had reached the attitudes at the latest in the First World war, with which he has appeared since his political beginnings, there is no obvious source evidence.
>
> (Pyta, 2015 p.151)

Nevertheless, as Richard Evans observes: 'His intentions were fixed long before he came to power. They were breath-taking in their ambition' (Evans, 2015 p.251). Key components of his worldview included Social Darwinism – the notion of the survival of the fittest – seeing race as the primary factor in history, a hatred of Marxism and an emphasis on Germany's need for 'living space' (*Lebensraum*). Finally, his hatred of the Soviet Union, combined with a pathological anti-Semitism – his 'very first and last recorded political statements concerned the "Jewish Question"' (Kershaw, 2008 p.89) – meant that Hitler represented an existential threat to world peace and to humanity itself. In his authoritative two-volume biography of Hitler, Ian Kershaw states:

> The initial anti-capitalist colouring of Hitler's antisemitism had given way by mid-1920 to the connection in his thinking of the Jews with the evils of Soviet Bolshevism. It was not that Hitler substituted the image of the Jews behind Marxism for that of the Jews behind capitalism. Both coexisted in his fixated loathing. It was a hatred so profound that it could only have been based on deep fear. This was of a figure in his imagination so powerful that it was the force behind both international finance capital and Soviet Communism. It was the image of a 'Jewish world conspiracy' that was almost unconquerable – even for National Socialism.
>
> (Kershaw, 2008 p.245)

Meanwhile, German scholar Peter Longerich considers what we can learn from *Mein Kampf,* written in prison (1924–5), and the *Second Book*, produced in secluded Berchtesgaden, in 1928, but not actually published until 1962. 'His "programme", although it can only be elicited by careful analysis of the second volume, was a repetition and expansion of the ideas that he had already been putting forward before 1923. In addition to his notorious virulent anti-Semitism and his identification of Jews with Bolsheviks/Marxists, he now introduced another important theme, "the question of space … What emerges clearly from *Mein Kampf* is that the main goal of a future Nazi foreign policy was to be the conquest of living space in eastern Europe."' Ultimately, states Longerich, 'this goal was to be achieved by *destroying* the Soviet Union' (Longerich, 2019 p.136–7). On numerous occasions in the 1920s Hitler elaborated on what he had in mind. On 23 May 1928, for example he stated that his intention was 'to lead our people into bloody action, not for an adjustment of its boundaries, but to *save it into the most distant future* by securing so much land and ground that the future receives back many times the bloodshed' (Evans, 2005 p.615).

In *The First Soldier, Hitler as Military Leader* Stephen G. Fritz explains, 'By first internalizing and then externalizing Germany's shame, and drawing on his own observations and experiences, Hitler began a quest to understand what had brought this disgrace on Germany, slowly assembling a worldview that, although violent – indeed, almost apocalyptic – nonetheless possessed for his adherents a compelling logic and considerable explanatory power' (Fritz, 2018 p.25). Meanwhile, in their important collection of *Documents on Nazism*, Noakes and Pridham state, 'The conquest of Russia was the crucial stage in Hitler's strategy because it involved the winning of the "living space" which Hitler regarded as essential to Germany's future' (Noakes and Pridham, 2001 p.9). However, Brendan Simms argues for a radical shift in perspective contending that: 'Hitler's principal preoccupation throughout his career was Anglo-America and global capitalism, rather than the Soviet Union and Bolshevism.' Simms book attempts to rebut 'the tenacious belief that the principal driver of Hitler's world view, and source of his virulent anti-Semitism, was fear of the Soviet Union or Bolshevism. It consequently does not accept the centrality, for him, of the Eastern Front in the Second World War' (Simms, 2019 p.29–30).

(b) German Foreign Policy under Hitler – 1933–5

Hitler came to power with strong ideological impulses but no clear idea of how to implement his foreign policy programme. Mindful of the need to consolidate his domestic authority, a recurring element in his early years in office was to make frequent soothing commitments to future peace and conciliation, while removing opposition, settling scores and accelerating rearmament. In May 1933, for example, Hitler spoke of his 'desire from the bottom of our hearts to live … in peace and friendship' (Noakes & Pridham, 2001 p.50). In reality, Hitler despised the international system of treaties and agreements, preferring unilateral deals to collective commitments. In late 1933, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and exited the Disarmament Conference. It is worth noting, incidentally, that the initiative for these two decisive developments came from within the military, rather than Hitler himself. Hitler's personal commitment to rearmament bolstered his relations with the leadership of the armed forces (*Wehrmacht*). Hitler's Defence Minister, General von Blomberg, was immediately sympathetic to the Nazi regime, supportive of Hitler's purge of the SA in June 1934 and willing, as in this directive from 1935, to say that 'For the Wehrmacht it is a matter of course that it is loyal to the National Socialist view of the State' (Noakes and Pridham, 2001 p.35).

Meanwhile, in January 1934, to the dismay of Stalin, Germany agreed a ten-year Non-Aggression Pact with the aggressively nationalist and authoritarian regime in Poland. This aimed to build on the two countries mutual hostility towards the Soviet Union. It would also further isolate France, while at the same time securing Germany's vulnerable eastern flank during the highly risky, first stages of secret rearmament. This temporary expedient illustrates Hitler's tactical flexibility but should not deflect from our understanding of Hitler's long-term intentions towards Poland. By the start of 1935, Germany's gigantic rearmament programme was becoming difficult to hide. Increases in the armed forces and aircraft production were followed in March with the formal announcement of the existence of a German air force, and just days later, a decree confirming the conscription of a peacetime army of thirty-six divisions. This level of rearmament placed Germany in a period of high-risk. Direct military confrontation at this time would have revealed military weakness rather than strength. Sadly, a recurring theme in the planning of the Western powers was to over-estimate Germany's military preparedness.

4.3 ITALY 1934–5

(a) Opposition to Anschluss

At first glance, it is tempting to suppose that Benito Mussolini, leader of Italy since October 1922, and Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany from January 1933, would have quickly formed a natural and straightforward alliance. Both from fairly humble, provincial settings, they shared a Fascist ideology, presented themselves as ruthless strong-men, delighted in grandiose presentation and were sworn to territorial conquest. Hitler's first overseas visit to another Head of State was to Venice in June 1934 to meet with Mussolini. The dictators would meet on no less than seventeen occasions. The title of F. W. Deakin's influential study of Mussolini and Hitler's relationship, *The Brutal Friendship* (1962), reflects their supposed strength and ideological affinity. The fact that their full-blown military alliance was called the Pact of Steel (not signed until 1939) seems to support this narrative.

In fact, the relationship was at times problematic and often rested on geopolitical considerations, self-interest and pragmatism. Anschluss – the political union of Germany and Austria – illustrates this point. Anschluss was forbidden under article 80 of the

Versailles Treaty. But for the Austrian-born Hitler, Anschluss was, as he made clear in Mein Kampf, 'a task to be furthered with every means'. Within Austria, a flourishing Nazi movement was doing everything it could to undermine the authority of Chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss. Dollfuss made vigorous attempts to supress the Austrian Nazis but with deadly consequences. On 25 July 1934 the Nazis invaded the Austrian chancellery and Dollfuss was murdered. The assassination seemed to signal an impending German invasion. At this point, Italy was completely opposed to a German move on this scale. Hitler's rearmament was in its infancy, his domestic power not yet fully secure. All it took at this stage was for Italy to mobilize troops at the Brenner Pass, for Hitler and his generals to conclude that this was not the time for military confrontation. It was a stark message to Hitler that his rearmament programme was far from complete and effectively removed the issue of Anschluss from the agenda for four years.

Peter Longerich's *Hitler* sheds new light on the extent to which Hitler mishandled Mussolini in the build-up to the Austrian crisis in the summer of 1934:

> Mussolini responded to Hitler's insistence that Italy should 'withdraw its protective hand from Austria' by merely 'taking note' of it. It is incomprehensible how Hitler could have gained the impression from these conversations that Mussolini would not respond to an attempted coup by the Austrian Nazis, authorized by Hitler a few weeks later … Mussolini … was by no means prepared to accept a bloody coup d'état; indeed, in view of Hitler's explicit renunciation of an Anschluss, he was bound to consider it a breach of faith. This fateful mistake, a complete misunderstanding of his 'friend', delayed for years both the alliance with Italy, to which he had aspired since the 1920s, and his Austrian plans. It can only be explained in the light of the euphoria and wishful thinking gripping Hitler during the domestic political crisis of early summer 1934.
>
> (Longerich, 2019 p.395)

It appears then that having taken drastic measures domestically against Ernst Röhm and the SA in the Night of the Long Knives (30 June 1934), Hitler over-extended on the foreign policy stage and had to make a hugely embarrassing climb down.

To make matters worse, from Hitler's perspective, the immediate response of Italy after the Anschluss had been rebuffed, seemed to indicate that Italy was gravitating towards the Western powers. Thus, in January 1935 Italy signed an agreement with France. In April, the prime ministers of Britain, Italy and France seemed determined to present a united front against the threat of a rapidly rearming Germany. Meeting at Stresa in Italy, the three powers issued a declaration re-stating their determination to protect Austria's territorial integrity. Briefly, the 'Stresa Front' seemed to mark the high point of the Western alliance that had effectively isolated Germany. To the Western powers, Mussolini could potentially provide a crucial bulwark to German aggression.

(b) Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (1935)

It was a fleeting moment. Mussolini's commitment to peace was half-hearted. His ideological conviction – that it was perfectly legitimate for a 'powerful' nation to invade a 'weaker' one – had already led him to plan military action in East Africa, against Abyssinia (Ethiopia) which was a member of the League of Nations. In 1934, Mussolini stated:

> We are becoming – and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire – a military nation … To complete the picture, warlike – that is to say, endowed even to a higher degree with the virtues of obedience, sacrifice and dedication to country.

> This means that the whole life of the nation, political, economic, and spiritual, must be systematically directed towards our military requirements.
>
> (Traynor, 1991 p.166)

Eager to evoke the heady spirit of the Roman Empire, Mussolini was also desperate to avenge Italy's humiliating defeat at the hands of Ethiopian forces at the Battle of Adowa in 1896.

These developments were pivotal in undermining collective security. In May 1935, the German ambassador in Rome praised a remarkable improvement in relations between the two powers. This was paving the way for Mussolini's military aggression in Abyssinia. While the peace-loving liberal states condemned Italian aggression, the Nazi regime clearly recognized the opportunity for the two Fascist states to move closer together. The unprovoked Italian attack, including the use of poison gas and indiscriminate bombing, came in October 1935. This direct challenge to the effectiveness of the League of Nations merely exposed its fault lines. Firstly, without Germany and the United States, sanctions were inevitably likely to be limited. Within the British government a substantial faction within the Conservative Party warned that harsh sanctions would simply push Mussolini into the arms of Hitler. Therefore, the economic sanctions that were proposed were strictly limited and raised the embarrassing spectacle of the League going out of its way not to antagonize Mussolini. For this reason, oil was deliberately excluded from the list of prohibited items. The West, the United States included, responded with fine words but very limited deeds. In 'Mussolini and Hitler' Christian Goeschel makes clear that 'As he was planning the invasion of Ethiopia, Mussolini put out his feelers to Hitler to prepare for the eventuality that Italy would find itself isolated on the international stage' (Goeschel, 2018 p.63). Even in the wake of Italian atrocities in Ethiopia, the United States continued to supply Italy with a wide range of important materials. By the time Abyssinia was finally defeated in April 1936 the League had suffered terminal damage to its reputation. From Mussolini's perspective the attractions of a closer relationship with Nazi Germany seemed more evident than ever. To understand these developments further, we need to shift our attention from Rome to London.

4.4 GREAT BRITAIN – FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1930S

Ostensibly, the British Empire emerged from the Great War in robust health, covering a quarter of the world's land mass and containing more than 500 million people. In reality, this scale also presented a multitude of problems as the world adjusted from the trauma of war. Nationalism, now more evident than ever, manifested itself in Ireland, Egypt and India. A new appetite for genuine democracy was becoming more evident in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Strategic issues included dealing with a multitude of imperial commitments, securing a route to India through the Suez Canal, to guarantee oil supplies from the Persian Gulf, while addressing the need for massive social spending at home against a backdrop of huge war debt. By the 1930s, the complexity of the international challenge facing Great Britain included how to respond to the rise of Bolshevism in Russia, an increasingly aggressive regime in Japan and an isolationist United States, while maintaining a commitment to the principles of collective security and the League of Nations. In Europe, France's relentless insistence on a policy of revanchism towards Germany seemed at times, to many in the British political establishment to be a bigger issue than Germany's 'reasonable' and 'timely' requests for revisions of the Versailles Treaty. This sentiment was reinforced when, in January 1935, the occupants of the Saarland, a small territory on the western side of the Rhineland voted overwhelmingly in a plebiscite to become citizens of the Third Reich. Incidentally, it has to be noted that the

inhabitants of the Saarland had been subject to sustained intimidation by the local Nazi Party prior to this vote.

Ironically, it was the British who spectacularly undermined the embryonic Stresa Front. In June 1935 Britain signed a naval agreement with Germany allowing a ratio in future construction of 35 per cent to 100 per cent in Britain's favour. Crucially, the British had not even discussed these matters with her international partners, before the agreement was signed. The long-term international system of collective security idealized at Versailles and the newly formed Stresa Front were both under duress. German historian Heinrich August Winkler notes that 'At this point, Japan seemed to pose a rather greater danger to Britain than Germany' (Winkler, 2015 p.573).

4.5 FRANCE IN THE 1930S

The extent of the material and psychological damage inflicted upon France in the Great War was reflected in her determination to impose a suitably harsh settlement upon Germany in the Versailles settlement. But in the face of President Wilson's determination to secure a more liberal peace settlement, and Britain's willingness to find a compromise, the French President, Clemenceau, was unable to secure the stringent settlement he had hoped for. By 1933, with Hitler in power in Germany the situation for France remained deeply problematic. As the memory of the First World War moved from one decade to the next, there was a decisive shift in opinion from both the British public and the government. The majority view came to be that people believed it was time to move on from the 1914–18 conflict. Germany's stance – to revise the terms of the Versailles settlement – appeared to the UK government to be relatively reasonable. France's determination to isolate Germany and strictly enforce the settlement seemed increasingly to be an untenable position.

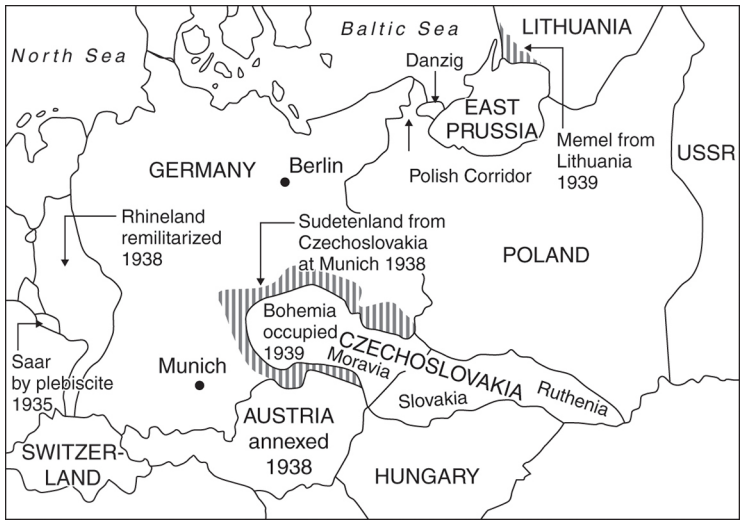
These general issues came together over the matter of the Rhineland. The terms of the Versailles settlement were perfectly clear in this area. Germany was forbidden from building fortifications, stationing troops or carrying out any military preparations on the left bank of the Rhine and within a 50-kilometre strip on the right bank. In Paris, these conditions were seen as critical to future French security. As early as the summer of 1935 French military intelligence was suggesting that the reoccupation of the Rhineland had been discussed by Hitler and his generals. But the French reaction to these ominous warnings was to fret rather than to prepare.

Psychologically, France was not prepared to stand alone against Germany, even though their military prowess was not as complete as Paris imagined. Standing up to any German infringement would require an emphatic promise of support from Britain. But from a British perspective the prospect of damaging the fragile peace over the matter of German troops marching back into their own territory – or in the popular view, 'their own back garden', was unappealing. The Western powers remained preoccupied with Italy's invasion of Abyssinia and Britain made clear to France that she could offer moral support but no practical or armed assistance.

4.6 TENSION IN EUROPE INCREASES 1936–8

(a) Germany and the Reoccupation of the Rhineland – March 1936

Despite relentless propaganda proclaiming the success of the Nazi economic miracle, as 1935 came to an end, the government was under considerable domestic pressure. Kershaw provides a detailed picture of 'a wider drop in the popularity of the regime in the winter of 1935–6 … All at once, it seemed, the food shops were empty. … The Berlin police



Map 4.2 **Germany's Actions before the Second World War**

reported a serious deterioration in the mood of the population in autumn 1935 as a result of the fats and meat shortage, rising food prices, and renewed growth in unemployment … By January 1936, a further deterioration had set in. The mood among a "shockingly high percentage of the population" in Berlin was said to be "directly negative towards State and Movement"' (Kershaw, 2008 p.577).

Hitler's regime understood perfectly well that an immediate solution to a domestic malaise was to pull off a foreign policy coup. The absence of a firm response from Britain and France over the Abyssinian question in 1935–6 had made a profound impression upon Hitler, who was increasingly convinced that the West lacked political will and leadership. While several cautious generals advised against such a risky step, Hitler overcame a period of some anxiety and indecision to ultimately resolve to openly challenge the Rhineland settlement. In his excellent biography of Goebbels, Peter Longerich examines the Propaganda Minister's diary entries, to scrutinize Hitler's decision-making process: 'A first hint of Hitler's intention is found in Goebbel's diary as early as 20 January 1936, reporting that Hitler had announced over lunch that at some point he was going "suddenly to resolve the problem of the Rhineland zone." A month later, in conversation with Goebbels, Hitler came back to the subject: "He is pondering it. Should he remilitarize the Rhineland? Difficult question"' (Longerich, 2019 p.312). In typical Hitler fashion, a period of anxiety and indecision was ultimately followed by headstrong resolve. Germany sent troops (in limited numbers that could have easily been overwhelmed by a robust Western response) into the demilitarized Rhineland on 7 March 1936. Announcing the move to an enraptured Reichstag, Hitler combined his announcement of his breach of the treaty with a 'pledge that now, more than ever, we shall strive for an understanding between the European peoples … We have no territorial demands to make in Europe … Germany will never break the peace' (Traynor, 1991 p.291). The truth was that despite Hitler's warm words, he did not wish to tamper with the Versailles Treaty, but rather to eviscerate it. While Britain and France looked on, apparently divided and helpless, rumours soon began to circulate that the German troops had been under orders to rapidly withdraw from the Rhineland if they had faced any type of resistance. But no Western response was forthcoming. Hitler's domestic prestige soared. Those in military circles who had urged caution had lost all authority. Most damaging of all, in the long-term, was the

impact on Hitler himself. From that moment the Fuhrer's self-belief reached new heights. He now believed, more than ever, that providence had delivered him to Germany and the two together could not be stopped.

(b) The Spanish Civil War – 1936

The sense of international crisis that pervaded Europe seemed even more acute upon the outbreak of a Civil War in Spain. In July 1936 an attempted nationalist coup led by the right-wing army general, Francisco Franco, sought to topple the government of the Republican Popular Front, which was based on a coalition of the left. This sparked a bitter, bloody war that would last for three years. While Britain was anxious that the conflict should not spread beyond Spain, Franco found immediate and significant backing from both Mussolini and Hitler. The two fascist leaders provided weapons and 'volunteers', while British volunteers joined the opposite side, through the idealistic International Brigade. The Spanish Civil War like the Reoccupation of the Rhineland and the invasion of Abyssinia made the League of Nations look ineffectual and embarrassing. The ideological overlap between Italy and Germany seemed more marked than ever. The Civil War would reach its nadir in April 1937 when the German Condor Legion caused international outrage when they bombed the beautiful Basque town of Guernica, in northern Spain.

(c) The United States in the 1930s – Isolationism

Hitler was also aware that Roosevelt's America was by no means geared to war. In fact, the nation's armed forces had been steadily reduced since 1918. By 1933, the Army numbered only 140,000, and in the dire financial climate of 1933, Roosevelt felt that there was scope for even further cuts. Acutely aware of the depth of isolationist feeling, there was little to suggest that any strong leadership of the kind to discourage the emerging dictatorships would emanate from the White House. This extract from a major election speech in 1936 illustrates his desire to be seen as a leader who would keep well clear of the gathering storm in Europe:

'I have seen blood running from the wounded. I have seen men coughing out their gassed lungs. I have seen the dead in the mud. I have seen cities destroyed … I hate war' (Dallek, 2017 p.260).

A similar sign that the United States was not yet prepared to take a stand came when American athletes took part in the heavily stage-managed Olympic Games in Berlin in the summer of 1936. However, a significant indication that the President was beginning to distance himself from the strict isolationists came from a highly publicized speech in Chicago on 5 October 1937. He told his audience that:

> The epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease … War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared … There is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality. There must be positive endeavours to preserve peace.
>
> (Kennedy, 1999 p.405)

Roosevelt watched the reaction to his 'quarantine' speech with great interest; his conclusion was that the country was by no means ready to follow his lead. Meanwhile, with memories of how the country had been dragged into the European war in 1917 still

fresh in the nation's memory, Congress passed a succession of neutrality legislation from the mid-1930s onwards, designed to prevent this from happening again. In particular, the Neutrality Acts sought to avoid two 'mistakes' made under Wilson. First, this time around, America was determined to avoid siding with one belligerent by providing them with economic assistance. Secondly, Congress was determined to avoid the problems caused by the sinking of belligerent vessels which then turned out to have American citizens on board. With little opposition expressed in Congress, these Acts clearly reflected the public mood which remained firmly against any intervention. While Roosevelt had misgivings about the Neutrality Acts, he was not prepared to go against the tide of opinion at this time.

(d) Chamberlain becomes prime minister (1937)

When Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister of Great Britain in May 1937 he was determined to act in the face of the growing menace from the dictators. The newly appointed leader did not lack self-belief. As his biographer, Robert Self, explains, 'After six years of increasing personal ascendancy, Chamberlain felt not the slightest hint of self-doubt. On the contrary, political supremacy only reinforced an innate confidence which now bordered on arrogance' (Self, 2006 p.262). William R. Rock offers a neat summary:

> Neville Chamberlain was in the years 1937–1939, a Prime Minister with a mission. The mission was somehow to arrive at a general settlement of differences with an increasingly aggressive Germany. The policy he developed, partly on the precedent of his predecessors and partly anew, was called appeasement. It has since become one of the most controversial policies in the history of international relations.
>
> (Rock, 1977 p.1)

However, when Chamberlain attempted to enlist the support of the Roosevelt White House, he quickly reached the conclusion that the United States was not to be trusted. The Prime Minister recognized the potential value of the United States as an ally, but confided in his sister that it was best 'to count on nothing from the Americans but words' (Self, 2006 p.277). Meanwhile, sanctions against Mussolini eventually pushed the Italian dictator away from the democratic European powers into the arms of his Fascist neighbour, Hitler. When Hitler and Mussolini met (for only the second time) in September 1937, both Germany and Italy went to inordinate lengths to celebrate the meeting of hearts and minds, while the West saw the meeting as an ominous symbol of what was to come. In fact, despite the obvious common ground between the two leaders, it would not be until May 1939 that Italy and Germany formally committed to an alliance, which they named the Pact of Steel.

(e) Japan – 1936–9

Meanwhile, far away in Japan, as the militarists gained increasing control, they looked to Europe for further support. Germany was ideologically attractive to Japan but it was well known that Hitler had entertained a long-standing notion of a potential alliance with England. By the autumn of 1936 it appeared that he was looking for alternatives and had likely concluded that Britain would not give him the free hand in eastern Europe he craved. It was not too surprising then, when in November 1936, Nazi Germany reached an 'anti-Communist agreement' with the Japanese. The historian Theo Sommer calls the arrangement 'a hesitant alliance – an international peck on the cheek between two very unequal brothers who felt hardly any need to act in solidarity with one another'

(Ullrich, 2016 p.60). Nevertheless, the agreement probably bolstered resolve in Tokyo for a new period of aggression that was to unfold in 1937. Intermittent, relatively innocuous incidents between Chinese and Japanese troops had taken place over several years. But tensions reached a new high in the sweltering summer of 1937. On July 7th–8th, at the historic Marco Polo Bridge, 15 kilometres west of Beijing, a series of what one authority calls 'low level skirmishes' broke out (Mitter, 2013 p.200). Whereas in the past, the Chinese had tended to concede to Japanese aggression, on this occasion, from faraway central China, Chiang Kai-shek, who had been the leader of China's Nationalist Party since 1926, came to the conclusion that a more robust response was called for.

The July exchanges were followed, in August, by further fighting in Shanghai, raising a direct threat to the substantial British interests in the region. When the motor vehicle of the British Ambassador to China came under attack from a Japanese aeroplane, tension seemed to be reaching an untenable level. The Japanese defused the situation with an expression of 'regret' but their subsequent shelling of the American gunboat, the USS *Panay*, in December underlined the seriousness of the situation in the Far East. Things would only get worse. Rana Mitter underlines the drastic consequences of the decision to stand up to Japanese aggression:

> In recent years the sheer scale of the war in China has become apparent. What began on 7 July 7 1937 as an unplanned local conflict … escalated into an all-out war between the two great nations of East Asia; it would not end until August 1945. In the eight intervening years China's Nationalist government was forced into exile, along with millions of refugees. Huge tracts of the country were occupied by the Japanese …
>
> The toll that the war inflicted on China is still being calculated, but conservative estimates number the dead at 14 million at least (the British Empire and United States each lost over 400,000 during the Second World War, and Russia more than 20 million) The number of Chinese refugees may have reached more than 80 million. The greater part of China's hard-won modernization was destroyed.
>
> (Mitter, 2013 p.40)

Of course, in 1937, no one could have foreseen the scale of the destruction about to unfold in Asia. From Neville Chamberlain's perspective, the Prime Minister, only in office since May 1937, 'could not imagine anything more suicidal than to pick a quarrel with Japan at the present moment when the European situation had become so serious' (Bouverie, 2019 p.135). But at this stage, Chamberlain was energized rather than daunted by the scale of the challenge. In October 1937 he confided in his sister, that he had already imagined, 'far-reaching plans … for the appeasement of Europe and Asia and for the ultimate check to the mad armament race, which if allowed to continue must involve us all in ruin' (Bouverie, 2019 p.135).

(f) Germany 1937 'Driven to War'?

If the Second World War had already effectively begun in Asia, in Europe, the leaders of the democratic nations still entertained the idea that peace could be maintained, even though the reputation of the League of Nations was in tatters. However, the international crisis now accelerated. Hitler had observed that German rearmament and the reoccupation of the Rhineland had been allowed to proceed without international opposition. The fact that Hitler's western frontier was increasingly fortified now encouraged him to look to central Europe. While many historians believe this was the unfolding of a plan, others have claimed that in terms of timing, the charismatic leader was being 'driven' to war. Three

factors may have been at work. First, Hitler seems increasingly at this time to have been mindful of his own mortality. A minor operation on a throat polyp in 1935**,** and intense stomach pains in 1936, made the hypochondriac dictator anxious as to his future health. Perhaps his time at the helm was limited. Secondly, within Germany, economic data pointed comprehensively to the fact that the self-proclaimed economic miracle was about to give way to a serious recession. This was absolutely at odds with the notion of heroic leadership which was the regime's staple. Spectacular achievements in foreign policy were urgently needed as a popular distraction. Thirdly, military intelligence suggested that Hitler's opponents, most notably perhaps the Soviet Union, were rapidly rearming and would inevitably only grow stronger.

(g) The Hossbach Conference – November 1937

It may be that these factors came together in November 1937, at what has become known as the Hossbach Conference. At the Nuremberg Trials of 1946, prosecutors claimed that this was the moment when Hitler effectively outlined to his military top brass a path to war. 'They referred to "the plot … divulged at the Hossbach meeting", at which "the plan to attack had begun to take definiteness as to time and victim."' As long ago as 1961, renowned historian A. J. P. Taylor claimed that rather than a blueprint for war, 'Hitler's exposition was in large part day-dreaming … The conference was a manoeuvre in domestic affairs.' It seems fair to say that dismissals of this type have not stood the test of time. More credible is Anthony P. Adamthwaite's view that 'The Hossbach Memorandum confirms the continuity of Hitler's thinking: the primacy of force in world politics, conquest of living space in the east, anti-Bolshevism, hostility to France. Hitler's warlike intentions were now explicit.' Wolfram Pyta's recent work reaffirms this view, seeing Hossbach as the key date when Hitler 'revealed his war plan' (Pyta, 2015 p.792). Coincidentally, in January 1938, personal scandals compromised two proponents of a more conservative foreign policy: the War Minister, Field Marshal von Blomberg, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General von Fritsch. When they stepped down, Hitler placed himself in the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

(h) Anschluss with Austria (March 1938)

In the early spring of 1938, the words of the Hossbach Conference gave way to action. In February, the Austrian Chancellor, Schuschnigg, came under sustained personal pressure to allow Anschluss to proceed. Confident that Mussolini would no longer intervene, Schuschnigg was personally presented with forceful German demands to recognize that National Socialism was compatible with loyalty to Austria. Hitler insisted that Seyss-Inquart, a known Nazi sympathizer, be appointed Minister of the Interior, crucially, with control of the police. With Hitler seeking nothing less than complete coordination of Austria's foreign policy and economic development, Schuschnigg briefly showed defiance when he announced a plan for the Austrian people to vote in a plebiscite. This brave move outraged Hitler but also revealed that Austria's international neighbours had no plans to come to Schuschnigg's rescue. Resistance collapsed, Schuschnigg resigned and Seyss-Inquart was appointed Chancellor. German soldiers entered Austria in the early hours of 12 March. Closer scrutiny of the actions of the occupying forces has revealed ample evidence that this move was spontaneous and rushed rather than carefully planned. Panzer tanks were observed refuelling at petrol stations en route to Vienna, with the drivers using tourist maps to plan their route. Historians have generally agreed that rather than Hitler it was Goering who pushed this initiative in his desperation to seize control of Austria's

sizeable economic assets. Finally, it was only when Hitler personally received a rapturous reception in his home town of Linz that he turned his initial plan of assimilation into a full-scale invasion.

Four things were now evident: First, the anti-Semitic atrocities that took place on the streets of Vienna around this time, lifted a veil on the real nature of the Nazi regime. Secondly, it was now clear that Italy would side with Germany, turning a blind eye to the occupation of Austria. Thirdly, the popularity of Anschluss in Germany and Austria was so widespread that Hitler's personal prestige reached new heights. Finally, it was also obvious that western military intervention in central Europe was fraught with practical and logistical difficulty. It now looked to Hitler that there was very little to stop him fulfilling the agenda that had been in his mind since at least 1933. The attention of Hitler and the West now turned to Czechoslovakia.

(i) Czechoslovakia in crisis 1938

The Anschluss left Czechoslovakia's borders horribly exposed. Hitler now insisted that the Sudetenland with its substantial German minority of more than 3.5 million be returned to Germany. Even before the Czech crisis began, senior British politicians displayed little loyalty to the Czech state. Many in the British establishment regarded the country as an artificial creation and Churchill had famously dismissed the entire Czech settlement as 'an affront to self-determination'. A glance at the map of Europe, particularly with Mussolini ever closer to Hitler, suggested that military intervention by the west in this region would be exceptionally difficult. Britain had no formal agreement to defend the Czechs, although the French did. As tensions grew, Czechoslovakia became the first country to actually carry out major military preparations in order to defend her borders against Germany. Outraged by Czech defiance, Goebbels launched what would become a summer of atrocity stories allegedly committed by the Czechs against the Sudeten Germans. At the end of May 1938 Hitler informed his generals that a previously 'patient' policy towards the issue of Czechoslovakia had now changed: 'It is my unalterable decision to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future' (Noakes and Pridham, 2001 p.104).

(j) Great Britain and the policy of Appeasement – 1938

Meanwhile, in Downing Street, the Prime Minister had asked his military team to assess Britain's prospects in the event of a full-scale war with Germany. The report back was honest but unsettling. The pace of German rearmament meant that Britain's military leadership now felt that a victory in a short war against Hitler could not be guaranteed. Britain was terribly vulnerable to air attack, raising the spectre of mass civilian casualties. The military urgently needed to accelerate its own programme of rearmament. This made the prospect of preserving peace all the more beguiling to Chamberlain, a man who had personal experience of loss in the Great War and who loathed the futility of modern warfare. Chamberlain was fundamentally a man of action and at the height of his personal authority.

With the storm clouds gathering over Europe and Asia and with some experts arguing that war was inevitable, Chamberlain decided in September 1938 to go to see Hitler in person so that war could be avoided. We need to remember that in the late 1930s the notion of a British Premier boarding a plane to fly across Europe to meet face-to-face with Hitler was considered novel and bold. On September 15th on the first flight of what would become a trilogy, Chamberlain and his close associate, Lord Halifax, the recently appointed Foreign Secretary, fortified themselves with ham sandwiches and whisky, on their way from London to Munich. In the flesh, at Hitler's mountain retreat in

Berchtesgaden, Chamberlain found Hitler physically unimpressive. Hitler was in general, polite but firm, insisting to Chamberlain that the Sudetenland be transferred to Germany. Chamberlain told Hitler that this was an outcome he was prepared to consider but that he would need to return home to secure approval from his cabinet colleagues, with the proviso that Hitler would not pre-empt this with an invasion. Hitler accepted this, but refused to consider the wider issue of peace until his territorial demands were satisfied.

Chamberlain duly returned for the second summit, in the scenic spa town of Bad Godesberg, on the Rhine, hoping to agree a deal which would bring the Czech crisis to an end. Hitler had been largely courteous at the first meeting but Chamberlain was now faced with an aggressive, petulant Fuhrer who demanded the immediate German military occupation of the Sudetenland. Chamberlain stood his ground, and thirty-six hours of tense bargaining ended with Hitler agreeing to defer military action by a few days. The grumbling Chancellor told the Prime Minister that he was the first man to whom he had ever made such concessions. Chamberlain returned home somewhat bewildered by Hitler's behaviour and gloomy at the prospects for peace. While Chamberlain loathed Hitler's behaviour, he now seemed convinced that successful resolution of this one outstanding issue could mark a turning point in Anglo-German relations. The Prime Minster sought Cabinet approval for accession to Hitler's demands, although deep divisions at the heart of government began to emerge.

(k) The Munich Conference – September 1938

France and Czechoslovakia now stood ready to reject Hitler's terms, but in a national radio broadcast, the Prime Minister told the nation that he was prepared 'to pay even a third visit to Germany', faced with the 'horrible, fantastic, incredible fact that Britain was preparing for war because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing'. Chamberlain proposed a last-ditch Anglo-German conference and Hitler responded with an invitation to Munich for the two countries, to be joined by Italy and France. In late September 1938, at the Munich Conference, effectively brokered by Mussolini, the West meekly handed over the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia to Hitler in order to avoid war: Hitler's threats had made the West buckle. Chamberlain came away with guarantees on the future integrity of rump Czechoslovakia, and Hitler's signature on a 'piece of paper', which promised that future disputes would be resolved by discussion and negotiation. Hitler may have wanted war, but among the German people and in the wider European community, there was widespread gratitude that Chamberlain appeared to have averted war. His uncharacteristically public display of exultation and relief upon his return to London would come back to haunt Chamberlain when Hitler subsequently treated those promises with contempt.

4.7 1939: ON THE BRINK OF WAR

(a) The United States

Roosevelt could do little more than observe these dismal events from a distance. In the words of David Kennedy, in 1938 'the American President was … a weak and resourceless leader of an unarmed, economically wounded, and diplomatically isolated country' (Kennedy, 1999 p.419). Hitler was able to cynically take advantage of the lethal combination of American isolationism and British appeasement. In January 1939, Roosevelt used his State of the Union Address in an attempt to modify public opinion: 'when storms from abroad directly challenge … There comes a time in the affairs of men when they must prepare to defend not their homes alone but the tenets of faith and humanity on which

their churches, their governments and their very civilization are founded.' With the world growing smaller 'and weapons of attack so swift', 'no nation can be safe'. Roosevelt's conclusion was that the United States should look again at the 'many methods short of war' which were open to it. He asked the Congress for special funds of $300 million for the building of new aircraft. It was a small start to what would eventually become a monumental enterprise, but at this point it did not come close to deterring Hitler.

(b) Germany invades Czechoslovakia – March 1939

There is ample evidence that Hitler felt intense personal frustration when the Munich settlement preserved peace. Fest's analysis of 1973 remains compelling: 'From the spring of 1939 Hitler exhibited a noteworthy inability to break his own momentum. The infallible sense of tempo he had shown only a few years before, in the course of taking power, now began to desert him and to give way to a neurasthenic craving for sheer movement' (Fest, 1974 p.574). His attention remained focused upon Czechoslovakia. In addition to its substantial German minority, Czechoslovakia also contained a sizeable Slovak population in addition to smaller numbers of Polish and Hungarian people. From the start of 1939, Germany tried to exert pressure on rump Czechoslovakia by encouraging each of these groups to agitate for their separatist claims. At exactly the same time, the Polish government came under pressure to agree to the construction of a major road and railway through the Polish corridor, in addition to the return of Danzig (Gdansk) to Germany.

Hitler now displayed his contempt for Chamberlain and the Munich agreement by ruthlessly occupying the rump of Czechoslovakia, absorbing 8 million non-Germans into the Reich in the process. On 15th March German troops entered Prague and established a 'Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia', while Slovakia was declared 'independent but under German protection'. The only saving grace was that any sense that Hitler's word could be relied upon had effectively disappeared. Hitler had clearly gone beyond his previously stated aims of merely wishing to include all Germans in one German nation. A week after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Germany also took control of the Lithuanian port of Memel. The future of Poland now moved to the centre of the international agenda. Crucially, Hitler could no longer claim that there was a limit to German demands. Now that it was clear that Hitler's promises were empty, British public opinion towards appeasement sharply shifted. As William Rock explains, 'Nearly everywhere the reduction of Munich to utter mockery was seen as totally discrediting appeasement and finally compelling its abandonment' (Rock, 1977 p.18). Chamberlain's defiant statement in the Commons that Britain should not 'be deflected from our course' (Rock, 1997 p.18) provoked widespread criticism in the press, parliament and from within the Foreign Office. Attention now shifted further east, to Poland.

(c) Poland – 1939

Following the destruction of the remnants of Czechoslovakia, Poland assumed huge strategic importance to Germany. Until the matter of Poland was resolved, Hitler would not have a free hand to act against either France or Russia. In particular, Hitler now agitated for the return of Danzig (Gdansk), a German-speaking city which since Versailles had been under the control of the League of Nations. Secondly, Germany pressed hard for a new road and rail link through the 'Polish Corridor' which separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany. While Chamberlain was still determined to avoid a war if possible, British policy now shifted dramatically in both tone and substance. Chamberlain used a speech in Birmingham on 17 March to unequivocally condemn the German betrayal of the Munich

agreement. The Prime Minister posed the question: 'Is this the last attack upon a small State, or is it to be followed by other? Is this, in fact, a step in the direction of an attempt to dominate the world by force?' Finally, he stressed that 'no greater mistake could be made than to suppose that, because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, the nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it were ever made' (Self, 2006 p.353).

At the end of March 1939, Britain and France guaranteed to lend Poland 'all support in their power' in response to 'any action which clearly threatened Polish independence' (Self, 2006 p.357). In April, a similar promise was extended to Romania and Greece. Hitler was enraged by the British guarantee, which had the further effect of emboldening the Poles to resist Hitler's demands. While still not seeking an armed conflict with Britain, Hitler's personal experience of Chamberlain's steadfast desire for peace had made a lasting impression. Surely, Hitler believed, the British would not now risk war over Poland. While, from Germany's perspective, Britain's intentions remained difficult to read, Hitler was increasingly unwilling to defer an attack against Poland.

The focus on Poland marked a step change in German foreign policy. William Carr states:

> a revisionist war against Poland was an interesting departure from the *Mein Kampf* strategy and one for which Hitler was largely responsible. And it landed him in a war against Britain he did not desire and one in which his Italian ally refused to participate. Nor was war the only alternative open to the Nazis. Even after the entry into Prague and the breach with Poland the British government was still anxious for an understanding with Germany. And the German demands on Poland were not so unreasonable that the dispute might not have been settled round the table had Hitler been willing to negotiate … The British government was willing enough for economic cooperation and for some frontier revision in the east. It was Hitler who peremptorily rejected any alternative to war. (Carr, 1986 p.57)

Carr's analysis is supported by the change of tone in Berlin that now took place. Hitler's 'diplomatic' exchanges became increasingly aggressive. In a sarcastic speech to the Reichstag in April 1939, Hitler displayed his contempt for Roosevelt and the United States, making a personalized attack on Roosevelt. In private, sarcasm was replaced with brutal aggression. On April 11, a secret military directive for an attack on Poland, 'Operation White' was signed off. It was not just in Germany that the mood was deteriorating. On 7 April 1939 Italian forces invaded Albania. Ominously, on 22 May 1939, a ten-year 'Pact of Steel' was agreed by Hitler and Mussolini. (Although it should be noted that when war broke out in September 1939, Italy did not join in.) The following day an increasingly confident Hitler reaffirmed to senior army commanders that Poland was the next item on his agenda. He told his generals that 'the problem "Poland" cannot be dissociated from the showdown with the west … There is therefore no question of sparing Poland and we are left with the decision: To attack.' Once again, at a crucial stage, Hitler returned to his long-standing ideological convictions: 'It is not Danzig that is at stake. For us it is a matter of expanding our living space in the East and making food supplies secure' (Noakes and Pridham, 2001 p.129). If Hitler was to proceed Stalin's acquiescence was crucial. This scenario meant that the Soviet Union moved to the foreground of the international arena.

(d) The Soviet Union

From a Marxist perspective, Josef Stalin would have had little time either for Great Britain – 'Imperialists', or Nazi Germany, led by 'Fascists'. But Stalin was also a master

of logic and pragmatism. If principles needed to be put to one side, in order to stay in power, he would be happy to oblige. While his personal authority in 1939 was absolute, the direction of his foreign policy at this time was challenging and complex. A guiding principle would be to only engage in armed conflict with one nation at a time. At first, it was the belligerent activity of Japan in the east, which seemed to cause the most acute concern. In May 1939, Japanese incursions into the Mongolian People's Republic were at the forefront of Soviet diplomatic concerns. By late July, with the Kwantung Army planning new offensives against Mongolia, the Red Army was despatching major troop reinforcements into battle. By the time this exchange was over, in late August, Russia had inflicted major casualties on Japan, but also suffered significant losses of her own. This underlined the need for the Soviets to avoid further conflict elsewhere. With German rearmament and military expansion continuing apace, the prospect of a highly damaging war on two fronts, with perhaps Great Britain joining in opportunistically, was completely unacceptable to the arch-realist in the Kremlin. When the opportunity arose for diplomatic talks with Britain, Stalin was willing to engage. This activity caused alarm bells to ring in Berlin and prompted Germany to examine if their discussions with the Soviets of 'economic' issues could be extended to explore a much broader agreement.

Put simply then, both Britain and Germany were very interested in reaching an agreement with Stalin. However, the contrast between how the two potential suitors engaged with the Soviets could hardly have been more pronounced. Stifled by in-built scepticism about Stalin, Britain's diplomatic efforts remained in a low gear throughout. A relatively low-level diplomat was 'despatched' to Russia, but on a passenger steamer so slow that it could not but send a message of a lack of commitment from Britain. The mission seemed even more half-hearted when it emerged that only one member of the delegation (an aide) could speak Russian. Germany's commitment seemed in complete contrast. The German Foreign Secretary Ribbentrop flew to Moscow in Hitler's personal plane, sanctioned to move beyond an economic agreement to something much more significant, while starkly conveying that German tension with Poland had reached 'intolerable' levels (Kotkin, 2017 p.660).

It is not surprising then that it was Germany which was able to reach agreement with the Soviets on 23 August 1939. Even so, the dramatic announcement that 'The Government of the German Reich and the Government of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics' had signed a non-aggression pact, 'directed by the wish to strengthen the cause of peace between Germany and the USSR to strengthen the cause of peace', came as an absolute hammer blow, to those who believed that peace could still be maintained. No nation felt the ominous significance of this development more keenly than Poland. While the treaty contained the word 'peace', the cynicism of the agreement was clear. Just as Mussolini's acquiescence had been crucial to the Anschluss in the spring of 1938, so Hitler needed reassurance that Stalin would not intervene, in the event of a German move against Poland, in the autumn of 1939. Article I of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact stated that 'The two contracting parties undertake to refrain from any act of violence, any aggressive action, or any attack against one another, either individually, or jointly with other powers.' From this moment, Poland's fate was effectively sealed. Hitler still believed that at the crucial moment Britain would back down. He was mistaken.

4.8 THE INVASION OF POLAND – SEPTEMBER 1939

The large-scale German invasion of Poland commenced at 4.45 am on Friday 1st September. Carefully stage-managed border 'provocations' attempted to place the blame for the outbreak of hostilities on Poland. But the scale and extent of German military action made plain that the aggression stemmed purely from Berlin.

While heavily armoured divisions, supported by Panzer tanks, moved in from the north, west and south, the planes of the Luftwaffe launched bombing attacks on key targets. The barrage was supported by the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* which left its moorings in Danzig, and sailing a short distance in the Vistula, opened fire on a Polish military depot. The Third Reich's war against Poland would last for only five weeks, but while the opening moments described above may sound like the traditional elements of any conflict, the reality was very different. Months in the planning, the German hierarchy, had already taken an unprecedented decision. They now intended 'to eliminate entire segments of Polish society. Educators, intellectuals, political figures, noble families, Catholic clergy, leaders in the medical and legal professions … as part of an overall program to decapitate Polish society and deter resistance to German rule' (Rossino, 2003 p.xiii). While this aim in itself remains shocking, there was a further ideological dimension to Hitler's plans for Poland which was truly staggering. As Rossino explains in *Hitler Strikes Poland*:

> The SS directed its terror campaign against Polish Jews as well, utilizing mass executions and the destruction of Jewish property to force Jews out of German-occupied territory, all as part of the broader effort to 'cleanse' the new German East of peoples the Nazis defined as racially, ethnically, and culturally inferior. In effect, the Third Reich's invasion of Poland was not an ordinary war, but a new kind of conflict, a *Volkstumskampf,* or ethnic struggle, that conflated the unique ideological goals of National Socialism with the traditional military-political objective of establishing a German empire in eastern Europe.
>
> (Rossino, 2003 p.xiv)

Richard Evans makes plain the significance of this moment:

> With the takeover of Poland … for the first time, Hitler and the Nazis were ready to unleash the full force of their racial ideology. Occupied Poland was to become the proving-ground for the creation of the new racial order in East-Central Europe, a model for what Hitler intended subsequently to happen in the rest of the region – in Belarus, Russia, the Baltic states and the Ukraine. This was to show what the Nazi concept of a new 'living-space' for the Germans in the east would really mean in practice.
>
> (Evans, 2008 p.13)

The British Prime Minister had strained every sinew to avoid war. The sheer depth of his determination and earnestness, in the final hours of peace, opened him up to widespread ridicule and contempt. For two days, at the start of September, even as the brutal violation of Poland unfolded, Britain appeared to be wavering over its guarantee. Following bitter scenes in the Commons and an outraged response by several ministers, Britain finally declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. To the bitter end, Chamberlain appeared to be ready to negotiate with Germany if the invasion was halted and German troops withdrawn. William Rock, while often critically sympathetic to Chamberlain's character, laments that this shows 'his nearly indestructible attachment to the idea of a negotiated settlement with Germany which might yet bring European stability' (Rock, 1977 p.22).

Some historians have scorned the Prime Minister for appeasing Hitler, believing his willingness to engage and make concessions, encouraged a ruthless fanatic to keep going with his relentless programme of expansion, when he should have been much more forcibly deterred. Others have credited Chamberlain as a man of principle, who did everything he could to avoid war. Even when he declared war, Neville Chamberlain could not have imagined the depths of brutality, nihilism and depravity which this conflict would unleash. And thousands of miles away, the notional leader of the Western World, the American

President would campaign in 1940 on the promise that he would keep his country out of the war. Cowed by the efforts of isolationists, he would similarly strain every sinew to avoid the conflict, but perhaps for different reasons. On 1 September 1939, Roosevelt was woken in the middle of the night to be informed that the invasion of Poland had begun. Roosevelt replied: 'It has come at last. God help us all!' (Kennedy, 1999 p.425). Thousands of miles away, Hitler appeared before a packed Reichstag, in Berlin, dispensing with his usual Party clothing, and wearing for the first time, a grey military style uniform. Hitler informed the deputies that he had 'once again put on the uniform that has always been most sacred and dear to me. I shall not take it off again until after victory – or – I shall no longer live to see the end' (Longerich, 2019 p.652).

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Chapter

5 The Second World War 1939–45

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Unlike the 1914–18 war, the Second World War was a war of rapid movement; it was a much more complex affair, with major campaigns taking place in the Pacific and the Far East, in North Africa and deep in the heart of Russia, as well as in central and western Europe and the Atlantic. *The war falls into four fairly clearly defined phases*:

1 Opening moves: September 1939 to December 1940
By the end of September the Germans and Russians had occupied Poland. After a five-month pause (known as the 'phoney war'), German forces occupied Denmark and Norway (April 1940). In May, attacks were made on Holland, Belgium and France, who were soon defeated, leaving Britain alone to face the dictators (Mussolini had declared war in June, just before the fall of France). Hitler's attempt to bomb Britain into submission was thwarted in *the Battle of Britain* (July to September 1940), but Mussolini's armies invaded Egypt and Greece.

2 The Axis offensive widens: 1941 to the summer of 1942
The war now began to develop into a worldwide conflict. First Hitler, confident of a quick victory over Britain, launched an invasion of Russia (June 1941), breaking the non-aggression pact signed less than two years earlier. Then the Japanese forced the USA into the war by attacking the American naval base at Pearl Harbor (December 1941), and they followed this up by occupying territories such as the Philippines, Malaya, Singapore and Burma, scattered over a wide area. At this stage of the war there seemed to be no way of stopping the Germans and Japanese, though the Italians were less successful.

3 The offensives held in check: summer 1942 to summer 1943
This phase of the war saw three important battles in which Axis forces were defeated.

- In June 1942, the Americans drove off a Japanese attack on *Midway Island*, inflicting heavy losses.
- In October, the Germans under Rommel, advancing towards Egypt, were halted at *El Alamein* and later driven out of North Africa.
- The third battle was in Russia, where by September 1942, the Germans had penetrated as far as *Stalingrad* on the river Volga. Here the Russians put up such fierce resistance that in the following February the German army was surrounded and forced to surrender.

Meanwhile the war in the air continued, with both sides bombing enemy cities, while at sea, as in the First World War, the British and Americans gradually got the better of the German submarine menace.

4 The Axis powers defeated: July 1943 to August 1945
The enormous power and resources of the USA and the USSR, combined with an all-out effort from Britain and her Empire, slowly but surely wore the Axis powers down. Italy was eliminated first, and this was followed by an Anglo-American invasion of Normandy (June 1944) which liberated France, Belgium and Holland. Later, Allied troops crossed the Rhine and captured Cologne. In the east, the Russians drove the Germans out and advanced on Berlin via Poland. *Germany surrendered in May 1945 and Japan in August, after the Americans had dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki*.

5.1 OPENING MOVES: SEPTEMBER 1939 TO DECEMBER 1940

(a) Poland defeated

The Poles were defeated swiftly by the German *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war), which they were ill-equipped to deal with. It consisted of rapid thrusts by motorized divisions and tanks (*Panzers*) supported by air power. The *Luftwaffe* (the German air force) put the Polish railway system out of action and destroyed the Polish air force. Polish resistance was heroic but hopeless: they had no motorized divisions and they tried to stop advancing German tanks by massed cavalry charges. Britain and France did little to help their ally directly because French mobilization procedure was slow and out-of-date, and it was difficult to transport sufficient troops to Poland to be effective. When the Russians invaded eastern Poland, resistance collapsed. *On 29 September Poland was divided up between Germany and the USSR* (as agreed in the pact of August 1939).

(b) The 'phoney war'

Very little happened in the west for the next five months. In the east the Russians took over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and invaded Finland (November 1939), forcing her to hand over frontier territories which would enable the Russians to defend themselves better against any attack from the west. Meanwhile the French and Germans manned their respective defences – the Maginot and Siegfried Lines. Hitler seems to have hoped that the pause would weaken the resolve of Britain and France and encourage them to negotiate peace. This lack of action pleased Hitler's generals, who were not convinced that the German army was strong enough to attack in the west. It was the American press which described this period as the 'phoney war'.

(c) Denmark and Norway invaded, April 1940

Hitler's troops occupied Denmark and landed at the main Norwegian ports in April 1940, rudely shattering the apparent calm of the 'phoney war'. Control of Norway was important for the Germans because Narvik was the main outlet for Swedish iron-ore, which was vital for the German armaments industry. The British were interfering with this trade by laying mines in Norwegian coastal waters, and the Germans were afraid that they might try to take over some of Norway's ports, which they were in fact planning to do. Admiral Raeder, the German navy chief, realized that the fjords would be excellent naval bases from which to attack Britain's transatlantic supply lines. When a British destroyer chased the German vessel *Altmark* into a Norwegian fjord and rescued the 300 British prisoners aboard, Hitler decided it was time to act. On 9 April, German troops landed at Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim; although British and French troops arrived a few days

later, they were unable to dislodge the Germans, who were already well established. After a temporary success at Narvik, all Allied troops were withdrawn by early June because of the growing threat to France itself. *The Germans were successful* because the Norwegians had been taken by surprise and their troops were not even mobilized; local Nazis, under their leader Vidkun Quisling, gave the invaders every assistance. The British had no air support, whereas the German air force constantly harassed the Allies. *This Norwegian campaign had important results*:

- Germany was assured of her bases and her iron-ore supplies, but had lost three cruisers and ten destroyers. This made the German navy less effective at Dunkirk than it might have been (see (d) below).
- It showed the incompetence of Chamberlain's government. He was forced to resign and *Winston Churchill became British prime minister*. Although there has been criticism of Churchill's mistakes, there is no doubt that he supplied what was needed at the time – drive, a sense of urgency, and the ability to make his coalition cabinet work well together.

(d) Hitler attacks Holland, Belgium and France

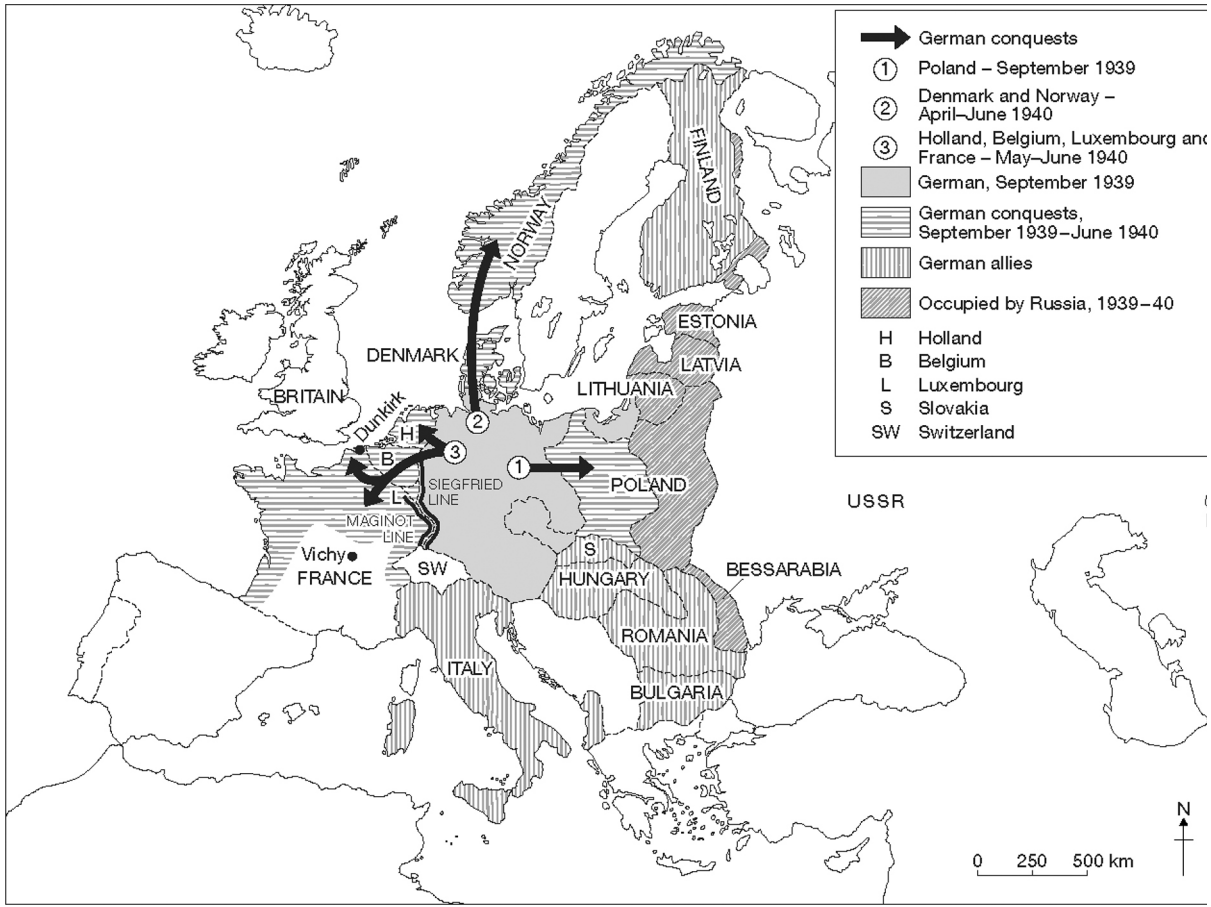
The attacks on Holland, Belgium and France were launched simultaneously on 10 May, and again *Blitzkrieg* methods brought swift victories. The Dutch, shaken by the bombing of Rotterdam, which killed almost a thousand people, surrendered after only four days. Belgium held out for longer, but her surrender at the end of May left the British and French troops in Belgium perilously exposed as German-motorized divisions swept across northern France; only Dunkirk remained in Allied hands. The British navy played the vital role in evacuating over 338 000 troops – two-thirds of them British – from Dunkirk between 27 May and 4 June. This was a remarkable achievement in the face of constant *Luftwaffe* attacks on the beaches. It would perhaps have been impossible if Hitler had not ordered the German advance towards Dunkirk to halt (24 May), probably because the marshy terrain and numerous canals were unsuitable for tanks.

The events at Dunkirk were important: a third of a million Allied troops were rescued to fight again, and Churchill used it for propaganda purposes to boost British morale with the 'Dunkirk spirit'. In fact it was a serious blow for the Allies: the troops at Dunkirk had lost all their arms and equipment, so that it became impossible for Britain to help France.

The Germans now swept southwards: *Paris was captured on 14 June and France surrendered on 22 June*. At Hitler's insistence the armistice (ceasefire) was signed at Compiègne in the same railway coach that had been used for the 1918 armistice. The Germans occupied northern France and the Atlantic coast (see Map 5.1), giving them valuable submarine bases, and the French army was demobilized. Unoccupied France was allowed its own government under Marshal Pétain, but it had no real independence and collaborated with the Germans. Britain's position was now very precarious. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, allowed secret enquiries to be made via Washington about what German peace terms would be; even Churchill thought about the possibility of a negotiated peace.

(e) Why was France defeated so quickly?

1 *The French were psychologically unprepared for war*, *and were bitterly divided between right and left*. The right was fascist in sympathy, admired Hitler's achievements in Germany and wanted an agreement with him. The communists, following



Map 5.1 **The beginning of the war in Europe – main German thrusts, 1939–40**

the non-aggression pact between Germany and the USSR, were also against the war. The long period of inaction during the 'phoney war' allowed time for a peace party to develop on the right, headed by Laval. He argued that there was no point in continuing the war now that the Poles, whom they were supposed to be helping, had been defeated.

2 *There were serious military weaknesses*.

- France had to face the full weight of an undivided German offensive, whereas in 1914 half the German forces had been directed against Russia.
- The French High Command was content to sit behind the Maginot Line, a line of defences stretching from the Swiss to the Belgian frontiers. Unfortunately the Maginot Line did not continue along the frontier between France and Belgium, partly because that might have offended the Belgians, and because Pétain believed that the Ardennes would be a strong enough barrier; but this was exactly where the Germans broke through.
- France had as many tanks and armoured vehicles as Germany, but instead of being concentrated in completely mechanized armoured divisions (like the Germans), allowing greater speed, they were split up so that each infantry division had a few. This slowed them to the speed of marching soldiers (infantry).
- The German divisions were supported by combat planes, another area neglected by the French.

3 *The French generals made fatal mistakes*.

- No attempt was made to help Poland by attacking Germany in the west in September 1939, which might have had a good chance of success.
- No troops were moved from the Maginot Line forts (most of which were completely inactive) to help block the German breakthrough on the River Meuse (13 May 1940).
- There was poor communication between the army and air force, so that air defence to drive German bombers off usually failed to arrive.

4 *Military defeats gave the defeatist right the chance to come out into the open and put pressure on the government to accept a ceasefire*. When even the 84-year-old Pétain, the hero of Verdun in 1916, urged peace, Prime Minister Reynaud resigned and Pétain took over.

(f) The Battle of Britain (12 August to 30 September 1940)

This was fought in the air, when Goering's *Luftwaffe* tried to destroy the Royal Air Force (RAF) *as a preliminary to the invasion of Britain*. The Germans bombed harbours, radar stations, aerodromes and munitions factories; in September they began to bomb London, in retaliation, they claimed, for a British raid on Berlin. The RAF inflicted heavy losses on the *Luftwaffe* (1389 German planes were lost as against 792 British); when it became clear that British air power was far from being destroyed, Hitler called off the invasion. *Reasons for the British success were*:

- Their chain of new radar stations gave plenty of warning of approaching German attackers.

- The German bombers were poorly armed. Though the British fighters (Spitfires and Hurricanes) were not significantly better than the German Messerschmitts, the Germans were hampered by limited range – they could only carry enough fuel to enable them to stay in the air about 90 minutes.
- The switch to bombing London was a mistake because it relieved pressure on the airfields at the critical moment.

The Battle of Britain was probably the first major turning point of the war: for the first time the Germans had been checked, demonstrating that they were not invincible. Britain was able to remain in the struggle, thus facing Hitler (who was about to attack Russia) with *the fatal situation of war on two fronts*. As Churchill remarked when he paid tribute to the British fighter pilots: 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'

(g) Mussolini invades Egypt, September 1940

Not wanting to be outdone by Hitler, Mussolini sent an army from the Italian colony of Libya which penetrated about 60 miles into Egypt (September 1940), while another Italian army invaded Greece from Albania (October). However, the British soon drove the Italians out of Egypt, pushed them back far into Libya and defeated them at Bedafomm, capturing 130,000 prisoners and 400 tanks. They seemed poised to take the whole of Libya. British naval aircraft sank half the Italian fleet in harbour at Taranto and occupied Crete. The Greeks forced the Italians back and invaded Albania. Mussolini was beginning to be an embarrassment to Hitler.

5.2 THE AXIS OFFENSIVE WIDENS: 1941 TO THE SUMMER OF 1942

(a) North Africa and Greece

Hitler's first moves in 1941 were to help out his faltering ally. In February he sent Erwin Rommel and the Afrika Korps to Tripoli, and together with the Italians, they drove the British out of Libya. After much advancing and retreating, by June 1942 the Germans were in Egypt approaching El Alamein, only 70 miles from Alexandria (see Map 5.2).

In April 1941 Hitler's forces invaded Greece, the day after 60 000 British, Australian and New Zealand troops had arrived to help the Greeks. The Germans soon captured Athens, forcing the British to withdraw, and after bombing Crete, they launched a parachute invasion of the island; again the British were forced to evacuate (May 1941).

The campaigns in Greece had important effects:

- It was depressing for the Allies, who lost about 36 000 men.
- Many of the troops had been removed from North Africa, thus weakening British forces there just when they needed to be at their most effective against Rommel.
- More important in the long run was that Hitler's involvement in Greece and Yugoslavia (which the Germans invaded at the same time as Greece) may well have delayed his attack on Russia. This was originally planned for 15 May and was delayed for five weeks. If the invasion had taken place in May, the Germans might well have captured Moscow before the winter set in.

Map 5.2 **North Africa and the Mediterranean**

(b) The German invasion of Russia (Operation Barbarossa) began on 22 June 1941

Hitler's motives seem to have been mixed:

- He feared that the Russians might attack Germany while his forces were still occupied in the west.
- He hoped that the Japanese would attack Russia in the Far East.
- The more powerful Japan became, the less chance there was of the USA entering the war (or so Hitler thought).
- But above all there was his hatred of communism and his desire for *Lebensraum* (living space).

According to historian Alan Bullock, 'Hitler invaded Russia for the simple and sufficient reason that he had always meant to establish the foundations of his thousand-year *Reich* by the annexation of the territory lying between the Vistula and the Urals.' It has sometimes been suggested that the attack on Russia was Hitler's greatest mistake, but in fact, as Hugh Trevor-Roper pointed out, 'to Hitler the Russian campaign was not a luxury: it was the be-all and end-all of Nazism; it could not be delayed. It was now or never.' Hitler did not expect a long war; he told one of his generals: 'We have only to kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down.'

The German attack was three-pronged:

- in the north towards Leningrad,
- in the centre towards Moscow,
- in the south through the Ukraine.

Map 5.3 **The Russian front**

It was *Blitzkrieg* on an awesome scale, involving close on 5.5 million men, and 3550 tanks supported by 5000 aircraft and 47 000 pieces of artillery. Important cities such as Riga, Smolensk and Kyiv were captured (see Map 5.3). The Russians had been caught off their guard, in spite of British and American warnings that a German attack was imminent. Stalin apparently believed that Hitler could be trusted to honour the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact, and was extremely suspicious of any information which came from Britain or the USA. The Russians were still re-equipping their army and air force, and many of their generals, thanks to Stalin's purges, were inexperienced.

However, the German forces failed to capture Leningrad and Moscow. They were severely hampered by the heavy rains of October, which turned the Russian roads into mud, and by the severe frosts of November and December when in some places the temperature fell to minus 38°C. The Germans had inadequate winter clothing because Hitler had expected the campaigns to be over by the autumn. Even in the spring of 1942 no progress was made in the north and centre as Hitler decided to concentrate on a major drive south-eastwards towards the Caucasus to seize the oilfields.

(c) The USA enters the war, December 1941

The USA was brought into the war by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (their naval base in the Hawaiian Islands) on 7 December 1941. Until then, the Americans, still intent

on isolation, had remained neutral, though after *the Lend-Lease Act (April 1941)*, they had provided Britain with massive financial aid.

Japanese motives for the attack were tied up with her economic problems. The government believed they would soon run short of raw materials and cast longing eyes towards territories such as Britain's Malaya and Burma, which had rubber, oil and tin, and towards the Dutch East Indies, also rich in oil. Since both Britain and Holland were in no fit state to defend their possessions, the Japanese prepared to attack, though they would probably have preferred to avoid war with the USA. However, relations between the two states deteriorated steadily. The Americans assisted the Chinese, who were still at war with Japan; when the Japanese persuaded Vichy France to allow them to occupy French Indo-China (where they set up military bases), President Roosevelt demanded their withdrawal and placed an embargo on oil supplies to Japan (26 July 1941). Long negotiations followed in which the Japanese tried to persuade the Americans to lift the embargo. But stalemate was reached when the Americans insisted on a Japanese withdrawal both from Indo-China and from China itself. When the aggressive General Tojo became prime minister (16 October), war seemed inevitable.

The attack was brilliantly organized by Admiral Yamamoto. There was no declaration of war: 353 Japanese planes arrived undetected at Pearl Harbor, and in two hours, destroyed 350 aircraft and five battleships; 3700 men were killed or seriously injured. Roosevelt called 7 December 'a date which will live in infamy'.

Pearl Harbor had important results:

- It gave the Japanese control of the Pacific, and by May 1942 they had captured Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong and Burma (all part of the British Empire), the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, and two American possessions, Guam and Wake Island (see Map 5.4).
- It caused Hitler to declare war on the USA.

Map 5.4 **The war in the Pacific**

Declaring war on the USA was perhaps Hitler's most serious mistake. He need not at this stage have committed himself to war with the USA, in which case the Americans might well have concentrated on the Pacific war. However, the Germans had already assured the Japanese that they would come to Japan's aid if she was ever at war with the USA. Hitler assumed that President Roosevelt of the USA would declare war on Germany sooner or later, so he wanted to get Germany's declaration of war in first, to show the German people that he, and not the Americans, controlled events. In fact the US Congress was naturally determined to have their revenge on Japan, but was still reluctant to get involved in Europe. Roosevelt would have had a difficult job to persuade Congress to declare war on Germany; Hitler's action saved him the trouble.

As it was, Germany was now faced with the immense potential of the USA. This meant that with the vast resources of the USSR and the British Commonwealth as well, the longer the war lasted, the less chance there was of an Axis victory. It was essential for them to deliver swift knock-out blows before the American contribution became effective.

(d) Brutal behaviour by Germans and Japanese

The behaviour of both Germans and Japanese in their conquered territories was ruthless and brutal. The Nazis treated the peoples of eastern Europe as sub-humans, fit only to be slaves of the German master-race. As for the Jews – they were to be exterminated. As American journalist and historian William Shirer put it:

> Nazi degradation sank to a level seldom experienced by man in all his time on earth. Millions of decent, innocent men and women were driven into forced labour, millions were tortured in the concentration camps, and millions more still (including nearly six million Jews) were massacred in cold blood or deliberately starved to death and their remains burned.

This was both amoral and foolish: in the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) and in the Ukraine, the Soviet government was so unpopular that decent treatment would have turned the people into allies of the Germans.

The Japanese treated their prisoners of war and the Asian peoples badly. Again this was ill-advised: many of the Asians, like those in Indo-China, at first welcomed the Japanese, who were thought to be freeing them from European control. The Japanese hoped to organize their new territories into a great economic empire known as a *Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere*, which would be defended by sea and air power. However, harsh treatment by the Japanese soon turned the Asians against rule from Tokyo, and determined resistance movements began, usually with communist involvement.

5.3 THE OFFENSIVES HELD IN CHECK: SUMMER 1942 TO SUMMER 1943

In three separate areas of fighting, Axis forces were defeated and began to lose ground:

- Midway Island
- El Alamein
- Stalingrad

(a) Midway Island, June 1942

At Midway Island in the Pacific the Americans beat off a powerful Japanese attack, which included five aircraft carriers, nearly 400 aircraft, 17 large warships and an invasion force of 5000 troops. The Americans, with only three carriers and 233 planes, destroyed four of the Japanese carriers and about 330 planes. *There were several reasons for the American victory against heavier odds*:

- They had broken the Japanese radio code and knew exactly when and where the attack was to be launched.
- The Japanese were over-confident and made two fatal mistakes: they split their forces, thus allowing the Americans to concentrate on the main carrier force; and they attacked with aircraft from all four carriers simultaneously, so that when they were all rearming, the entire fleet was extremely vulnerable.

At this stage the Americans launched a counter-attack by dive-bombers, which swooped unexpectedly from 19 000 feet, sinking two of the carriers and all their planes.

Midway proved to be a crucial turning point in the battle for the Pacific: the loss of their carriers and strike planes seriously weakened the Japanese, and from then on the Americans maintained their lead in carriers and aircraft, especially dive-bombers. Although the Japanese had far more battleships and cruisers, they were mostly ineffective: the only way war could be waged successfully in the vast expanses of the Pacific was by air power operating from carriers. Gradually the Americans under General MacArthur began to recover the Pacific islands, beginning in August 1942 with landings in the Solomon Islands. The struggle was long and bitter and continued through 1943 and 1944, a process which the Americans called ‘island hopping’.

(b) El Alamein, October 1942

At El Alamein in Egypt, Rommel’s Afrika Korps were driven back by the British Eighth Army, commanded by Montgomery. This great battle was the culmination of several engagements fought in the El Alamein area: first the Axis advance was temporarily checked (July); when Rommel tried to break through he was halted again at Alam Halfa (September); finally, seven weeks later in the October battle, he was chased out of Egypt for good by the British and New Zealanders.

The Allies were successful partly because during the seven-week pause, massive reinforcements had arrived, so that the Germans and Italians were heavily outnumbered – 80 000 men and 540 tanks against 230 000 troops and 1440 tanks. In addition, Allied air power was vital, constantly attacking the Axis forces and sinking their supply ships as they crossed the Mediterranean, so that by October there were serious shortages of food, fuel oil and ammunition. At the same time the air force was strong enough to protect the Eighth Army’s own supply routes. Montgomery’s skilful preparations probably clinched the issue, though he has been criticized for being over-cautious, and for allowing Rommel and half his forces to escape into Libya.

However, there is no doubt that *the El Alamein victory was another turning point in the war*:

- It prevented Egypt and the Suez Canal from falling into German hands.
- It ended the possibility of a link-up between the Axis forces in the Middle East and those in the Ukraine.

- More than that, it led on to the complete expulsion of Axis forces from North Africa. It encouraged landings of British troops in the French territories of Morocco and Algeria to threaten the Germans and Italians from the west, while the Eighth Army closed in on them from Libya. Trapped in Tunisia, 275000 Germans and Italians were forced to surrender (May 1943), and the Allies were well-placed for an invasion of Italy.

The desert war had been a serious drain on German resources that could have been used in Russia, where they were badly needed.

(c) Stalingrad

At Stalingrad the southern prong of the German invasion of Russia, which had penetrated deeply through the Crimea, capturing Rostov-on-Don, was finally checked. *The Germans had reached Stalingrad at the end of August 1942*, but though they more or less destroyed the city, the Russians refused to surrender. In November they counter-attacked ferociously, trapping the Germans, whose supply lines were dangerously extended, in a large pincer movement. With his retreat cut off, the German commander, von Paulus, had no reasonable alternative but to surrender with 94 000 men (2 February 1943).

If Stalingrad had fallen, the supply route for Russia's oil from the Caucasus would have been cut off, and the Germans had hoped to advance up the River Don to attack Moscow from the south-east. This plan had to be abandoned; but more than this was at stake – *the defeat was a catastrophe for the Germans*: it shattered the myth that they were invincible, and boosted Russian morale. They followed up with more counter-attacks, and in July 1943, in a great tank battle at Kursk, they forced the Germans to keep on retreating. Early in 1944 the Germans had to abandon the siege of Leningrad and to retreat from their position west of Moscow. It was now only a matter of time before the Germans, heavily outnumbered and short of tanks and guns, were driven out of Russia.

5.4 WHAT PART WAS PLAYED BY ALLIED NAVAL FORCES?

The previous section showed how the combination of sea and air power was the key to success in the Pacific war and how, after the initial shock at Pearl Harbor, the Americans were able to build up that superiority in both departments, which was to lead to the eventual defeat of Japan. At the same time the British navy, as in the First World War, had a vital role to play: this included protecting merchant ships bringing food supplies, sinking German submarines and surface raiders, blockading Germany, and transporting and supplying Allied troops fighting in North Africa and later in Italy. At first success was mixed, mainly because the British failed to understand the importance of air support in naval operations and had few aircraft carriers. Thus they suffered defeats in Norway and Crete, where the Germans had strong air superiority. In addition the Germans had many naval bases in Norway, Denmark, France and Italy. In spite of this, the British navy could point to some important achievements.

(a) British successes

- *Aircraft from the carrier* Illustrious *sank half the Italian fleet at Taranto (November 1940)*. The following March five more warships were destroyed off Cape Matapan.

- *The threat from surface raiders was removed* by the sinking of the *Bismarck*, Germany's only battleship at the time (May 1941).
- *The navy destroyed the German invasion transports* on their way to Crete (May 1941), though they could not prevent the landing of parachute troops.
- *They provided escorts for convoys carrying supplies to help the Russians*. These sailed via the Arctic to Murmansk in the far north of Russia. Beginning in September 1941, the first 12 convoys arrived without incident, but then the Germans began to attack them, until convoy 17 lost 23 ships out of 36 (June 1942). After this disaster, Arctic convoys were not resumed until November 1943, when stronger escorts could be spared. Altogether 40 convoys sailed: 720 out of a total of 811 merchant ships arrived safely, with valuable cargo for the Russians; this included 5000 tanks, 7000 aircraft and thousands of tons of canned meat.
- *Their most important contribution was their victory in the Battle of the Atlantic*.
- *Sea and air power together made possible the great invasion of France in June 1944.*

(b) The battle of the Atlantic

This was the struggle against German U-boats attempting to deprive Britain of food and raw materials. At the beginning of 1942 the Germans had 90 U-boats in operation and 250 being built. In the first six months of that year the Allies lost over 4 million tons of merchant shipping and destroyed only 21 U-boats. Losses reached a peak of 108 ships in March 1943, almost two-thirds of which were in convoy. However, after that the number of sinkings began to fall, while the U-boat losses increased. By July 1943 the Allies could produce ships at a faster rate than the U-boats could sink them, and the situation was under control.

The reasons for the Allied success were:

- more air protection was provided for convoys by long-range Liberators;
- both escorts and aircraft improved with experience;
- the British introduced the new centimetric radar sets, which were small enough to be fitted into aircraft; these enabled submarines to be detected in poor visibility and at night.

The victory was just as important as Midway, *El Alamein and Stalingrad*: Britain could not have continued to sustain the losses of March 1943 and still remained in the war.

5.5 WHAT CONTRIBUTION DID AIR POWER MAKE TO THE DEFEAT OF THE AXIS?

(a) Achievements of Allied air power

- *The first significant achievement was in the Battle of Britain (1940)*, when the RAF beat off the *Luftwaffe* attacks, causing Hitler to abandon his invasion plans.
- *In conjunction with the British navy*, *aircraft played a varied role*: the successful attacks on the Italian fleet at Taranto and Cape Matapan, the sinking of the German battleship *Tirpitz* by heavy bombers in Norway (November 1943), the protection of convoys in the Atlantic, and anti-submarine operations. In fact, in May 1943 Admiral Doenitz, the German navy chief, complained to Hitler that since the introduction of the new radar devices, more U-boats were being destroyed by aircraft than by naval vessels.

- *The American air force together with the navy played a vital part in winning the Pacific war against the Japanese*. Dive-bombers operating from aircraft carriers won *the Battle of Midway Island in June 1942.* Later, in the 'island-hopping' campaign, attacks by heavy bombers prepared the way for landings by marines, for example at the Mariana Islands (1944) and the Philippines (1945). American transport planes kept up the vital flow of supplies to the Allies during the campaign to recapture Burma.
- *The RAF took part in specific campaigns which would have been hopeless without them*: for example, during the war in the desert, operating from bases in Egypt and Palestine, they constantly bombed Rommel's supply ships in the Mediterranean and his armies on land.
- *British and Americans later flew parachute troops in, to aid the landings in Sicily (July 1943) and Normandy (June 1944)*, and provided air protection for the invading armies. (However, a similar operation at Arnhem in Holland in September 1944 was a failure.)

(b) Allied bombing of German and Japanese cities

The most controversial action was the Allied bombing of German and Japanese cities. The Germans had bombed London and other important British cities and ports during 1940 and 1941, but these raids dwindled during the German attack on Russia, which required all the *Luftwaffe's* strength. The British and Americans retaliated with what they called a 'strategic air offensive' – this involved massive attacks on military and industrial targets in order to hamper the German war effort. The Ruhr, Cologne, Hamburg and Berlin all suffered badly. Sometimes raids seem to have been carried out to undermine civilian morale, as when about 50 000 people were killed during a single night raid on Dresden (February 1945).

Early in 1945 the Americans launched a series of devastating raids on Japan from bases in the Mariana Islands. In a single raid on Tokyo, in March, 80 000 people were killed and a quarter of the city was destroyed. There has been debate about how effective the bombing was in hastening the Axis defeat. It certainly caused enormous civilian casualties and helped to destroy morale, but critics point out that heavy losses were also suffered by air-crews – over 158 000 Allied airmen were killed in Europe alone.

Others argue that this type of bombing, which caused the deaths of so many innocent civilians (as opposed to bombings which targeted industrial areas, railways and bridges), was morally wrong. Estimates of German civilian deaths from Allied bombing vary between 600 000 and a million; German raids on Britain killed over 60 000 civilians. In 2001 Swedish writer Sven Lindquist, in his book *A History of Bombing*, suggested that what he called 'the systematic attacks on German civilians in their homes' should be viewed as 'crimes under international humanitarian law for the protection of civilians'. However, Robin Niellands (2001) defended the bombing, pointing out that this is what could be expected to happen during a total war – in the context of what the Germans had done in eastern Europe and the Japanese in their occupied territories, this was the necessary 'price of peace'.

This was by no means the end of the controversy: in 2002 a German historian, Jorg Friedrich, in his book *Der Brand (The Fire)*, published an account of the horrific suffering inflicted by Allied bombers on German citizens; an English translation came out in 2007. He blamed specifically Churchill and Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, the head of Bomber Command. Friedrich clearly believed that these bombing raids were war crimes. Many British historians immediately condemned Friedrich's book. Corelli Barnett called it 'a historical travesty' designed to move the spotlight away from Nazi atrocities. To mark

the appearance of the English edition, York Membery, writing in *History Today* (January 2007), sought the views of some leading British historians. Richard Overy suggested that while it was time for a proper assessment of the bombing strategy, Friedrich played down the contribution of the Americans and felt that the general tone of his book was unhelpful. Overy went on to argue that the bombing was neither immoral nor strategically useless. Adam Tooze, an expert on the Nazi economy, wrote: 'unfortunately, if you start a war with Britain as Germany deliberately did, then this is the kind of war you have to be prepared to fight'. Bruce Kent, a peace campaigner and former secretary of CND, pointed out that the bombing raids probably were war crimes, but that the Nazis themselves were the first to begin bombing innocent civilians in Guernica (during the Spanish Civil War), Warsaw and Rotterdam.

As to the question of whether the bombing helped to shorten the war, it used to be thought that the campaign had little effect until the autumn of 1944. However, evidence from German archives shows that the RAF attack on the Ruhr in the spring of 1943 had an immediate effect on production. From July 1944, thanks to the increasing accuracy of the raids and the use of the new Mustang fighter escorts, which could outmanoeuvre all the German fighters, the effects of the bombings reached disaster proportions; synthetic oil production fell rapidly, causing acute fuel shortages. In October the vital Krupp armaments factories at Essen were put out of action permanently, and the war effort ground to a halt in 1945. By June 1945 the Japanese had been reduced to the same state.

In the end, therefore, after much wasted effort early on, *the Allied strategic air offensive was one of the decisive reasons for the Axis defeat*: besides strangling fuel and armaments production and destroying railway communications, it caused the diversion of many aircraft from the Eastern Front, thus helping the Russian advance into Germany.

5.6 THE AXIS POWERS DEFEATED: JULY 1943 TO AUGUST 1945

(a) The fall of Italy

This was the first stage in the Axis collapse. British and American troops landed in Sicily from the sea and air (10 July 1943) and quickly captured the whole island. This caused *the downfall of Mussolini, who was dismissed by the king*. Allied troops crossed to Salerno, Reggio and Taranto on the mainland and captured Naples (October 1943).

Marshal Badoglio, Mussolini's successor, signed an armistice and brought Italy into the war on the Allied side. However, the Germans, determined to hold on to Italy, rushed troops through the Brenner Pass to occupy Rome and the north. The Allies landed a force at Anzio, 30 miles south of Rome (January 1944), but bitter fighting followed before Monte Cassino (May) and Rome (June) were captured. Milan in the north was not taken until April 1945. The campaign could have been finished much earlier if the Allies had been less cautious in the early stages, and if the Americans had not insisted on keeping many divisions back for the invasion of France. *Nevertheless, the elimination of Italy did contribute towards the final Allied victory*:

- Italy provided air bases for bombing the Germans in Central Europe and the Balkans;
- German troops were kept occupied when they were needed to resist the Russians.

(b) Operation Overlord, 6 June 1944

Operation Overlord – the invasion of France (also known as the Second Front) – began on 'D-Day', 6 June 1944. It was felt that the time was ripe now that Italy had been eliminated,

the U-boats brought under control and Allied air superiority achieved. The Russians had been urging the Allies to start this Second Front ever since 1941, to relieve pressure on them. The landings took place from sea and air on a 60-mile stretch of Normandy beaches (code-named Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword) between Cherbourg and Le Havre. There was strong German resistance, but at the end of the first week 326 000 men with tanks and heavy lorries had landed safely.

It was a remarkable operation: it made use of prefabricated 'Mulberry' harbours, which were towed across from Britain and positioned close to the Normandy coast, mainly at Arromanches (Gold beach), and of PLUTO – pipelines under the ocean – carrying motor fuel. Eventually over 3 million Allied troops were landed. Within a few weeks most of northern France was liberated (Paris on 25 August), putting out of action the sites from which the German V1 and V2 rocket missiles had been launched with devastating effects on south-eastern Britain. In Belgium, Brussels and Antwerp were liberated in September.

(c) 'Unconditional surrender'

With the Germans forced to retreat in France and in Russia, there were people on both sides who hoped that there might be an armistice followed by a negotiated peace; this was the way in which the First World War had been brought to an end. However, Hitler himself always talked of a fight to the death, and there were serious differences between the Allies themselves over the question of peace negotiations. As far back as January 1943, President Roosevelt announced that the Allies were fighting for '*the unconditional surrender of Germany*, *Italy and Japan*'. Churchill and most of his staff were dismayed by this because they felt that it ruined all chances of a negotiated peace. Members of the British secret service were actually in touch with their German opposite numbers and with members of the German resistance to the Nazis, who hoped to persuade the German generals to help them overthrow Hitler. This, they believed, would lead to the opening of peace negotiations. The Nazi leaders were delighted with Roosevelt's announcement; Goebbels remarked: 'I should never have been able to think up so rousing a slogan. If our western enemies tell us, we won't deal with you, our only aim is to destroy you, how can any German, whether he likes it or not, do anything but fight on with all his strength?'

Many leading Americans, including General Eisenhower, were against 'unconditional surrender' because they realized that it would prolong the war and cause further unnecessary loss of life. Several times in the weeks before D-Day, the American chiefs of staff put pressure on Roosevelt to change his mind, but he stubbornly refused, in case this was taken by the Axis powers as a sign of weakness. The policy was continued by Roosevelt until his death in April 1945, and by his successor, Harry S. Truman. No attempts were made to negotiate peace with either Germany or Japan until they had both surrendered. Thomas Fleming, writing in *History Today* (December 2001), calculated that in the period from D-Day until the end of the war in August 1945, close on 2 million people were killed. Many of these lives could perhaps have been saved if there had been the prospect of a negotiated peace to encourage the German resistance to overthrow Hitler. As it was, concludes Fleming, the policy of unconditional surrender was 'an ultimatum written in blood'.

(d) The assault on Germany

With the success of the Second Front, the Allies began to gather themselves together for the invasion of Germany itself. If they had expected the German armies to fall apart rapidly, they must have been bitterly disappointed. The war was prolonged by desperate

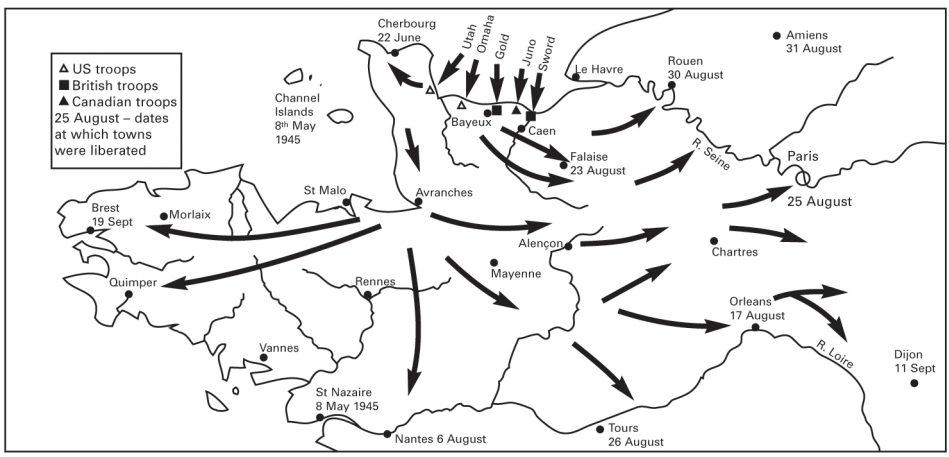
German resistance and by further disagreements between the British and Americans. Montgomery wanted a rapid thrust to reach Berlin before the Russians, but Eisenhower favoured a cautious advance along a broad front. *The British failure at Arnhem in Holland* (September 1944) seemed to support Eisenhower's view, though in fact the Arnhem operation (an attempt by parachute troops to cross the Rhine and outflank the German Siegfried Line) might have worked if the troops had landed nearer the two Rhine bridges.

Consequently Eisenhower had his way and Allied troops were dispersed over a 600-mile front (see Map 5.5), *with unfortunate results*:

- Hitler was able to launch an offensive through the weakly defended Ardennes towards Antwerp;
- the Germans broke through the American lines and advanced 60 miles, causing a huge bulge in the front line (December 1944).

Determined British and American action stemmed the advance and pushed the Germans back to their original position. But *the Battle of the Bulge*, as it became known, was important because Hitler had risked everything on the attack and had lost 250 000 men and 600 tanks, which at this stage could not be replaced. Early in 1945, Germany was being invaded on both fronts, from east and west. The British still wanted to push ahead and take Berlin before the Russians, but supreme commander Eisenhower refused to be hurried, and Berlin fell to Stalin's forces in April. *Hitler committed suicide and Germany surrendered*.

The question has sometimes been asked: why did the Germans keep on fighting to the bitter end in 1945 long after it must have been obvious that the war was lost? Why was there not some sort of popular uprising to force the government to start peace negotiations? Adam Tooze believes that one of the reasons was that a large section of German society was completely committed to the war effort, and actually took or suggested many of the initiatives which made it possible for Germany to fight to the death. Ian Kershaw has addressed these questions in his recent book *The End: Hitler's Germany 1944–45* (2011). In his view, the main reason is obvious: it lies in the nature of the Nazi regime and in Hitler's belief that relations between states were a life and death struggle



Map 5.5 **The D-Day landings – 6 June 1944**

for survival and supremacy. Hitler's attitude was completely irrational: either Germany would be totally victorious – the most powerful state in the world – or Germany would be destroyed. There could be no compromise. When it was all over, many Germans tried to blame the Allied policy of 'unconditional surrender' for their determination to fight on. However, Kershaw is adamant that the reason the Germans fought on has to be found inside Germany itself. Many Germans kept going because they were afraid of the enemy, especially the Russians, but also because they were afraid of Nazi officials. The Nazis hanged or shot people they described as defeatists, deserters and cowards, and generally bullied and terrorised the civilian population. Kershaw is not convinced by historians who claim that the Nazi regime was based overwhelmingly on popular consent. He concludes that terror was a vital element in sustaining the regime, just as it had been even in the years of peace before 1939.

(e) The defeat of Japan

On 6 August 1945 *the Americans dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima*, *killing perhaps as many as 84 000 people and leaving thousands more slowly dying of radiation poisoning*. Three days later they dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, which killed perhaps another 40 000; after this the Japanese government surrendered. The dropping of these bombs was one of the most controversial actions of the entire war. President Truman's justification was that he was saving American lives, since the war might otherwise drag on for another year. Many historians believe that the bombings were not necessary, since the Japanese had already put out peace feelers in July via Russia. One suggestion is that the real reason for the bombings was to end the fighting swiftly before the Russians (who had promised to enter the war against Japan) gained too much Japanese territory, which would entitle them to share the occupation of Japan. The use of the bombs was also a deliberate demonstration to the USSR of the USA's enormous power.

5.7 WHY DID THE AXIS POWERS LOSE THE WAR?

The reasons can be summarized briefly:

- shortage of raw materials;
- the Allies learning from their mistakes and failures;
- the Axis powers taking on too much;
- the overwhelming impact of the combined resources of the USA, the USSR and the British Empire;
- tactical mistakes by the Axis powers.

(a) Shortage of raw materials

Both Italy and Japan had to import supplies, and even Germany was short of rubber, cotton, nickel and, after mid-1944, oil. These shortages need not have been fatal, *but success depended on a swift end to the war,* which certainly seemed likely at first, thanks to the speed and efficiency of the German *Blitzkrieg*. However, the survival of Britain in 1940 was important because it kept the Western Front alive until the USA entered the war.

(b) The Allies soon learned from their early failures

By 1942 they knew how to check *Blitzkrieg* attacks and appreciated the importance of air support and aircraft carriers. Consequently they built up an air and naval superiority which won the battles of the Atlantic and the Pacific and slowly starved their enemies of supplies.

(c) The Axis powers simply took on too much

Hitler did not seem to understand that war against Britain would involve her empire as well, and that his troops were bound to be spread too thinly – on the Russian front, on both sides of the Mediterranean, and on the western coastline of France. Japan made the same mistake: as military historian Liddell-Hart put it, 'they became stretched out far beyond their basic capacity for holding their gains. For Japan was a small island state with limited industrial power.' In Germany's case, Mussolini was partly to blame: his incompetence was a constant drain on Hitler's resources.

(d) The combined resources of the USA, the USSR and the British Empire

These resources were so great that the longer the war lasted, the less chance the Axis had of victory. The Russians rapidly moved their industry east of the Ural Mountains and so were able to continue production even though the Germans had occupied vast areas in the west. By 1945 they had four times as many tanks as the Germans and could put twice as many men in the field. When the American war machine reached peak production it could turn out over 70 000 tanks and 120 000 aircraft a year, which the Germans and Japanese could not match. Albert Speer, Hitler's armaments minister from 1942, gave the impression that he had worked some sort of miracle, enabling Germany's arms production to keep pace with that of the enemy. However, Adam Tooze has shown that Speer was more successful as a self-publicist than as an armaments minister. He claimed credit for successful policies that were actually started before he took over; he blamed everybody else when his policies failed, and continued right to the end to produce a stream of false statistics.

(e) Serious tactical mistakes

- The Japanese failed to learn the lesson about the importance of aircraft carriers, and concentrated too much on producing battleships.
- Hitler should have defeated Britain before invading the USSR, which committed Germany to a war on two fronts. German plans for the invasion of Britain were vague and improvised, and they underestimated the strength of the enemy. Britain was saved for the Allies and was able to be used later as the base from which to launch the D-Day landings.
- Hitler failed to provide for a winter campaign in Russia and completely underestimated Russian resourcefulness and determination. The deeper the German army advanced into Soviet territory, the more its supply and communication lines became exposed to enemy counter-attacks. Hitler also became obsessed with the idea that the German armies must not retreat; this led to many disasters in Russia, especially Stalingrad, and left his troops badly exposed in Normandy (1944). This all helped to hasten defeat because it meant that scarce resources were being wasted.

- Hitler made a fatal mistake by declaring war on the USA after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.
- Another serious mistake was Hitler's decision to concentrate on producing V-rockets when he could have been developing jet aircraft; these might well have restored German air superiority and prevented the devastating bomb attacks of 1944 and 1945.

(f) Nazi racial policy

Nazi treatment of Jews, gypsies and homosexuals in occupied territories of the USSR alienated many of the conquered peoples who, with decent treatment, could have been brought on board to fight the Stalinist regime. Soviet rule was especially unpopular in the Ukraine.

5.8 THE HOLOCAUST

As the invading Allied armies moved into Germany and Poland, they began to make horrifying discoveries. At the end of July 1944, Soviet forces approaching Warsaw came upon the extermination camp at Majdanek near Lublin. They found hundreds of unburied corpses and seven gas chambers. Photographs taken at Majdanek were the first to reveal to the rest of the world the unspeakable horrors of these camps. It later emerged that over 1.5 million people had been murdered at Majdanek; the majority of them were Jews, but they also included Soviet prisoners of war, as well as Poles who had opposed the German occupation. This was only one of at least 20 camps set up by the Germans to carry out what they called the 'Final Solution' (*Endlosung*) of the 'Jewish problem'. Between December 1941, when the first Jews were killed at Chelmno in Poland, and May 1945 when the Germans surrendered, some 5.7 million Jews were murdered, along with hundreds of thousands of non-Jews – gypsies, socialists, communists, homosexuals and the mentally handicapped.

How could such a terrible atrocity have been allowed to happen? Was it the natural culmination of a long history of anti-Semitism in Germany? Or should the blame be placed fairly and squarely on Hitler and the Nazis? Had Hitler been planning the extermination of the Jews ever since he came to power, or was it forced on him by the circumstances of the war? These are some of the questions that historians have wrestled with as they try to explain how such a monstrous crime against humanity could have taken place.

Earlier interpretations of the Holocaust can be divided into two main groups.

- *Intentionalists* – historians who believed that responsibility for the Holocaust rests on Hitler, who had hoped and planned to exterminate the Jews ever since he came to power.
- *Functionalists* – historians who believed that the 'Final Solution' was in a sense forced on Hitler by the circumstances of the war.
- There is also a small group of misguided writers with anti-Semitic sympathies, who try to play down the significance of the Holocaust. They have variously argued that the numbers of dead have been greatly exaggerated; that Hitler himself was unaware of what was happening; and that other Nazis, such as Himmler, Heydrich and Goering, took the initiative; a few have even denied that the Holocaust ever took place at all. All these writers have now been largely discredited.

(a) The intentionalists

They argue that Hitler was personally responsible for the Holocaust. Right from his early days in Vienna he had been venomously anti-Semitic; in his book *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) he blamed the Jews for Germany's defeat in the First World War and for all her problems since. In his speech to the Reichstag in January 1939 Hitler declared: 'if international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, the result will be, not the bolshevization of the earth, and thereby the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'. The intentionalists stress the continuity between his ideas in the early 1920s and the actual policies that were carried out in the 1940s. As Karl Dietrich Bracher puts it, although Hitler may not have had a master plan, he certainly knew what he wanted, and it included the annihilation of the Jews; the Final Solution 'was merely a matter of time and opportunity'. Critics of this theory question why it took until the end of 1941 – almost nine years after Hitler came to power – before the Nazis began to murder Jews. Why did Hitler content himself with anti-Jewish legislation if he was so determined to exterminate them? In fact, following *Kristallnacht* – an attack on Jewish property and synagogues throughout Germany in November 1938 – Hitler ordered restraint and a return to non-violence.

(b) The functionalists

They believe that it was the Second World War which aggravated the 'Jewish problem'. About three million Jews lived in Poland; when the Germans took over the western part of Poland in the autumn of 1939, and occupied the rest of Poland in June 1941, these unfortunate people fell under Nazi control. The invasion of the USSR in June 1941 brought a further dimension to the 'Jewish problem', since there were several million Jews living in the occupied republics of the western USSR – Belorussia and Ukraine. The functionalists argue that it was sheer pressure of numbers that led the Nazi and SS leaders in Poland to press for the mass murder of Jews. Hitler's views were well known throughout Nazi circles; he simply responded to the demands of the local Nazi leaders in Poland. Hans Mommsen, one of the leading functionalists, believes that Hitler was 'a weak dictator' – in other words, more often than not, he followed the promptings of others rather than taking initiatives himself. As late as 2001 Mommsen was still suggesting that there was no clear evidence of any genocidal bent before 1939.

According to Ian Kershaw in his biography of Hitler (published in 2000), 'Hitler's personalized form of rule invited radical initiatives from below and offered such initiatives backing, so long as they were in line with his broadly defined goals.' The way to advancement in Hitler's Third Reich was to anticipate what the Führer wanted, and then 'without waiting for directives, take initiatives to promote what were presumed to be Hitler's aims and wishes'. The phrase used to describe this process was 'working towards the Führer'. The intentionalists are not impressed with this interpretation because they feel it absolves Hitler from personal responsibility for the atrocities committed during the war. However, this conclusion does not necessarily follow: many of these initiatives would not even have been proposed if his subordinates had not been well aware of the 'Führer's will'.

Some historians feel that the intentionalist *v.* functionalist debate is now somewhat dated and that both approaches can be misleading. For example, Allan Bullock in *Hitler and Stalin* (1991) pointed out that the most obvious interpretation of the genocide was a combination of both approaches. Richard Overy in *The Dictators* (2004) claims that

> both approaches to the hunt for genocide divert attention from the central reality for all Jews after 1933: whether or not the later genocide was explicit or merely implicit

in the anti-Jewish policies of the 1930s. … the vengeful and violent xenophobia promoted by the regime had the Jews as its primary object throughout the whole life of the dictatorship.

What were Hitler's motives? Why was he so obsessively anti-Jewish? It is clear from a secret memorandum which Hitler wrote in 1936, however crazy it may appear today, that he genuinely perceived the Jews as a threat to the German nation. He believed that the world, led by Germany, was on the verge of a historic racial and political struggle against the forces of communism, which he saw as a Jewish phenomenon. If Germany failed, the German *Volk* (people) would be destroyed and the world would enter a new Dark Age. It was a question of German national survival in the face of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. In the words of Richard Overy:

> The treatment of the Jews was intelligible only in the distorted mirror of German national anxieties and national aspirations. The system deliberately set out to create the idea that Germany's survival was contingent entirely on the exclusion or, if necessary, the annihilation of the Jew.

It was the convergence of Hitler's uncompromising anti-Jewish prejudice and his self-justification, together with the opportunity for action, which culminated in the terrible 'apocalyptic battle between "Aryan" and "Jew"'.

(c) The 'Final Solution' takes shape

Alan Bullock argued that the best way to explain how the Holocaust came about is to combine elements from both intentionalists and functionalists. From the early 1920s Hitler had committed himself and the Nazi party to destroying the power of the Jews and driving them out of Germany, but exactly how this was to be done was left vague. 'It is very likely', writes Bullock, 'that among the fantasies in which he indulged privately … was the evil dream of a final settlement in which every man, woman and child of Jewish race would be butchered. … But how, when, even whether, the dream could ever be realized remained uncertain.'

It is important to remember that Hitler was a clever politician who paid a lot of attention to public opinion. During the early years of his Chancellorship, he was well aware that the so-called 'Jewish question' was not a main concern of most German people. Consequently he would go no further than the Nuremberg Laws (1935), and even they were introduced to satisfy the Nazi hardliners. Hitler allowed *Kristallnacht* to go ahead in November 1938 for the same reason, and to test popular feeling. When public opinion reacted unfavourably, he called an end to violence and concentrated on excluding Jews as far as possible from German life. They were encouraged to emigrate and their property and assets were seized. Before the outbreak of war, well over half a million Jews had left the country; plans were being discussed to forcibly remove as many Jews as possible to Madagascar.

It was the outbreak of war, and in particular the invasion of Russia (June 1941), that radically changed the situation. According to Richard Overy, this was seen not as an accidental or unplanned opportunity for a more vigorous anti-Jewish policy, but as 'an extension of an anti-Semitic Cold War that Germany had been engaged in since at least her defeat in 1918'. The occupation of the whole of Poland and large areas of the USSR meant that many more Jews came under German control, but at the same time the conditions of war meant that it was almost impossible for them to emigrate. In Poland, around two and a half million Jews were forcibly moved from their homes and herded into overcrowded

ghettos in cities such as Warsaw, Lublin and Łódź. In 1939, for example, 375 000 Jews lived in Warsaw; after they captured the city, the Germans built a wall round the Jewish districts. Later, Jews from other parts of Poland were moved into Warsaw, until by July 1941, there were about 445 000 Jews crammed into this small ghetto. Nazi officials complained about the problems of coping with such large numbers of Jews – conditions in the ghettos were dreadful, food was deliberately kept in short supply and there was the danger of epidemics. Eventually 78 000 died from disease and starvation.

In December 1941, soon after Germany had declared war on the USA, Hitler stated publicly that his prophecy of January 1939, about the annihilation of Europe's Jews, would soon be fulfilled. The following day Goebbels wrote in his diary: 'The World War is here, the extermination of the Jews must be the necessary consequence.' There is no firm evidence as to exactly when the decision was taken to begin the implementation of the 'Final Solution' – to kill the Jews – but it was arguably in the autumn of 1941.

The decision was the result of a combination of various developments and circumstances:

- Hitler's self-confidence was at a new high point after all the German victories, especially the early successes of Operation Barbarossa.
- Hitler had already made it clear that the war in the east was something new. As Alan Bullock puts it: it was 'a racist–imperialist adventure … an ideological war of destruction, in which all the conventional rules of war, occupation and so on, were to be disregarded, political commissars shot out of hand and the civilian population made subject to summary execution and collective reprisals'. It was only a short step further to carry out the extermination of the Jews. In the words of Richard Overy: 'This was consistent with the long history of his anti-Semitism, which was always expressed in the idiom of war to the death.'
- It would now be possible to carry out the Final Solution in Poland and the USSR, *outside* Germany. Hitler would have no need to worry about German public opinion; there could be strict censorship of all news reporting in the occupied territories.

The Nazis wasted no time; as their forces advanced deeper into the USSR, communists and Jews were rounded up for slaughter both by SS units and by the regular army. For example, in two days at the end of September 1941, some 34 000 Jews were murdered in a ravine at Babi Yar, on the outskirts of Kyiv in Ukraine. At Odessa in the Crimea at least 75 000 Jews were killed. Any non-Jew who tried to hide or protect Jews in any way was unceremoniously shot along with the Jews and communists.

In January 1942, soon after the first Jews had been sent to the gas chambers at Chelmno in Poland, a conference was held at Wannsee (Berlin) to discuss the logistics of how to remove up to 11 million Jews from their homes in all parts of Europe and transport them into the occupied territories. At first the general idea seemed to be to kill off the Jews by forced labour and starvation, but this soon changed to a policy of systematically destroying them before the war ended. Hitler did not attend the Wannsee Conference; he kept very much in the background as regards the Final Solution. No order for its implementation signed by Hitler was ever found. This has been taken by a few historians as evidence that Hitler ought not to be blamed for the Holocaust. But this position is difficult to sustain. Ian Kershaw, after an exhaustive consideration of the evidence, comes to this conclusion:

> There can be no doubt about it: Hitler's role had been decisive and indispensable in the road to the 'Final Solution'. … Without Hitler and the unique regime he headed, the creation of a programme to bring about the physical extermination of the Jews would have been unthinkable.

(d) Genocide

As the extermination programme gained momentum, the Jews from eastern Europe were taken to Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka and Majdanek in eastern Poland; most of those from western Europe went to Auschwitz-Birkenau in south-west Poland (see Map 5.6). Between July and September 1942, some 300 000 Jews were transported from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp. By the end of 1942, over 4 million Jews had already been put to death. Even though the fortunes of war began to turn against the Germans during 1943, Hitler insisted that the programme should continue; and continue it did, long after it was perfectly clear to everybody that the war would be lost. In April 1943 the remaining Jews of the Warsaw ghetto rose in revolt; the rising was brutally crushed and most of the Jews were killed. Only about 10 000 were still alive when Warsaw was liberated in January 1945. In July 1944, after German forces had occupied Hungary, about 400 000 Hungarian Jews were taken to Auschwitz. As Russian forces advanced through Poland, the SS organized forced marches from the death camps into Germany; most of the prisoners either died on the way, or were shot when they arrived in Germany. On 6 August 1944, with the Russians only about a hundred miles away, the Germans moved 70 000 Jews from the Łódź ghetto, south-west of Warsaw, and took them to Auschwitz, where half of them were immediately sent to the gas chambers.

What sort of people could carry out such crimes against humanity? Historian Daniel Goldhagen, in his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, published in 1997, suggests that the German people were uniquely anti-Semitic and were collectively responsible for the many atrocities committed during the Third Reich. These included not just the 'Final Solution' of the 'Jewish problem', but also the euthanasia programme in which some 70 000 people deemed to be mentally handicapped or mentally ill were killed, the cruel treatment of the Polish people during the occupation, and the appalling way in which Russian prisoners of war and the civilian populations were treated. Michael Burleigh (2010) goes along with Goldhagen, suggesting that there was a sort of inherent anti-Semitism in the German people which the Nazis had only to tap into; there was no need to stir it up.

While Goldhagen's theory perhaps goes too far, there is no doubt that large numbers of ordinary Germans were willing to go along with Hitler and the other leading Nazis.

Alan Bullock provided this chilling description of what happened when each new batch of Jews arrived at one of the death camps:

> They were put through the same ghastly routine. White-coated doctors – with a gesture of the hand – selected those fit enough to be *worked* to death. The rest were required to give up all their clothing and possessions and then in a terrified column of naked men and women, carrying their children or holding their hands and trying to comfort them, were herded into the gas-chambers. When the screaming died down and the doors were opened, they were still standing upright, so tightly packed that they could not fall. But where there had been human beings, there were now corpses, which were removed to the ovens for burning. This was the daily spectacle which Hitler took good care never to see and which haunts the imagination of anyone who has studied the evidence.

Map 5.6 **The Holocaust**

Perhaps they were convinced by the arguments of men like Himmler, who told a group of SS commanders: 'We had the moral right, we had the duty to destroy this people which wanted to destroy us.' The SS, originally Hitler's bodyguard regiments, along with the security police, camp commandants and guards, and local *gauleiters* (governors), were all deeply implicated, and so was much of the Wehrmacht (the German army), which became increasingly ruthless and barbaric as the war in the east progressed. Leaders of big business and factory owners were willing to take advantage of the cheap labour provided by the camp inmates; others were grateful to get their hands on confiscated Jewish property and other assets; medical experts were prepared to use Jews in experiments which caused their deaths. At all levels of German society, there were people who happily took the chance to profit from the fate of the helpless Jews.

But such behaviour was not confined to the Germans: many Polish and Soviet citizens willingly collaborated in the genocide. Only three days after the invasion of the USSR began, 1500 Jews were savagely murdered in Lithuania by local militias, and soon thousands more had been killed by non-Germans in Belorussia and Ukraine. Ion Antonescu, the ruler of Romania from 1941 until 1944, was not bullied into deporting Romanian Jews: Romania was never occupied by Germans, and the initiative was taken by the Romanians themselves. However, without Hitler and the Nazis to provide the authority, the legitimacy, the backing and the drive, none of this would have been possible. Romania, though not actually occupied, was firmly within Germany's orbit.

On the other hand it must be remembered that many Germans courageously risked their lives to help Jews, giving them shelter and organizing escape routes. But it was a very dangerous business – such people themselves often ended up in concentration camps. Similarly in Poland, there were many people who were willing to help Jewish fugitives. In a recent book, historian Gunnar Paulsson suggests that in Warsaw there was a network of perhaps 90 000 'decent and honest people' – over 10 per cent of the city's population – who were directly or indirectly involved in assisting Jews in a variety of ways. This challenges the usual view that the Poles quietly went along with the mass extermination of their Jewish compatriots.

5.9 WHAT WERE THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR?

(a) Enormous destruction

There was enormous destruction of lives, homes, industries and communications in Europe and Asia.

Almost 40 million people were killed: well over half of them were Russians, 6 million were Poles, 4 million Germans, 2 million Chinese and 2 million Japanese. Britain and the USA got off comparatively lightly.

A further 21 million people had been uprooted from their homes: some had been taken to Germany to work as slave labourers, and around 7 million of these were still in Germany; some had been put into concentration camps, and some had been forced to flee from invading armies. The victorious powers were left with the problem of how to repatriate them (arrange for them to return home).

Large parts of Germany, especially her industrial areas and many major cities, lay in ruins. Much of western Russia had been completely devastated, and some 25 million people were homeless. France had suffered badly too: taking into account the destruction of housing, factories, railways, mines and livestock, almost 50 per cent of total

French wealth had been lost. In Italy, where damage was very serious in the south, the figure was over 30 per cent. Japan suffered heavy damage and a high death toll from bombings.

Though the cost was high, it did mean that the world had been rid of Nazism, which had been responsible for terrible atrocities. The most notorious was **the Holocaust** – *the deliberate murder in extermination camps of over five million Jews and hundreds of thousands of non-Jews*, mainly in Poland and Russia.

(b) There was no all-inclusive peace settlement

This was different from the end of the First World War, when an all-inclusive settlement was negotiated at Versailles. This was mainly because the distrust which had re-emerged between the USSR and the west in the final months of the war made agreement on many points impossible.

However, *a number of separate treaties were signed*:

- *Italy* lost her African colonies and gave up her claims to Albania and Abyssinia (Ethiopia).
- *The USSR* took the eastern section of Czechoslovakia, the Petsamo district and the area round Lake Ladoga from Finland, and held on to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which they had occupied in 1939.
- *Romania* recovered northern Transylvania, which the Hungarians had occupied during the war.
- *Trieste*, claimed by both Italy and Yugoslavia, was declared a free territory protected by the United Nations Organization.
- Later, at San Francisco (1951), *Japan* agreed to surrender all territory acquired during the previous 90 years, which included a complete withdrawal from China.

However, *the Russians refused to agree to any settlement over Germany and Austria*, except that they should be occupied by Allied troops and that East Prussia should be divided between Russia and Poland.

(c) The war stimulated important social changes

In addition to the population movements during the war, once hostilities were over, many millions of people were forced to move from their homes. The worst cases were probably in the areas taken from Germany by Russia and Poland, and in the German-speaking areas in Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia. About 10 million Germans were forced to leave and make their way to West Germany so that no future German government would be able to claim those territories. In some countries, especially the USSR and Germany, extensive urban redevelopment took place as ruined cities had to be rebuilt. In Britain the war stimulated, among other things, the Beveridge Report (1942), a plan for introducing a Welfare State.

(d) The war caused the production of nuclear weapons

The first-ever use of these weapons, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, demonstrated their horrifying powers of destruction. The world was left under the threat of a nuclear war that

might well have destroyed the entire planet. Some people argue that this acted as a deterrent, making both sides in the Cold War so frightened of the consequences that they were deterred or discouraged from fighting each other.

(e) Europe's domination of the rest of the world ended

The four western European states which had played a leading role in world affairs for most of the first half of the twentieth century were now much weaker than before. Germany was devastated and divided, France and Italy were on the verge of bankruptcy; although Britain seemed strong and victorious, with her empire intact, the cost of the war had been ruinous. The USA had helped to keep Britain going during the war by sending supplies, but these had to be paid for later. As soon as the war was over, the new US president, Truman, abruptly stopped all further help, leaving Britain in a sorry state: she had overseas debts of over £3000 million, many of her foreign investments had been sold off, and her ability to export goods had been much reduced. She was forced to ask for another loan from the USA, which was given at a high rate of interest; the country was therefore closely and uncomfortably dependent on the USA.

(f) Emergence of the superpowers

The USA and the USSR emerged as the two most powerful nations in the world, and they were no longer as isolated as they had been before the war. The USA had suffered relatively little from the war and had enjoyed great prosperity from supplying the other Allies with war materials and food. The Americans had the world's largest navy and air force and they controlled the atomic bomb. The USSR, though severely weakened, still had the largest army in the world. Both countries were highly suspicious of each other's intentions now that the common enemies, Germany and Japan, had been defeated. The rivalry of these two superpowers in the Cold War was the most important feature of international relations for almost half a century after 1945, and was a constant threat to world peace (see Chapter 7).

(g) Decolonization

The war encouraged the movement towards decolonization. The defeats inflicted on Britain, Holland and France by Japan, and the Japanese occupation of their territories – Malaya, Singapore and Burma (British), French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies – destroyed the tradition of European superiority and invincibility. It could hardly be expected that, having fought to get rid of the Japanese, the Asian peoples would willingly return to European rule. Gradually they achieved full independence, though not without a struggle in many cases. This in turn intensified demands for independence among the peoples of Africa and the Middle East, and in the 1960s the result was a large array of new states (see Chapters 24–5). The leaders of many of these newly emerging nations met in conference at Algiers in 1973 and made it clear that they regarded themselves as *a Third World*. By this they meant that *they wished to remain neutral or non-aligned* in the struggle between the other two worlds – communism and capitalism. Usually poor and under-developed industrially, the new nations were often intensely suspicious of the motives of both communism and capitalism, and they resented their own economic dependence on the world's wealthy powers.

(h) The United Nations Organization (UNO)

This emerged as the successor to the League of Nations. Its main aim was to try to maintain world peace, and on the whole it has been more successful than its unfortunate predecessor (see Chapters 3 and 9).

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Chapter

6 The Cold War: Problems of international relations after the Second World War

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Towards the end of the war, the harmony that had existed between the USSR, the USA and the British Empire began to wear thin and all the old suspicions came to the fore again. Relations between Soviet Russia and the West soon became so difficult that, although no actual fighting took place directly between the two opposing camps, the decade after 1945 saw the first phase of what became known as *the Cold War*. This continued, in spite of several 'thaws', until the collapse of communism in eastern Europe in 1989–91. What happened was that instead of allowing their mutual hostility to express itself in open fighting, *the rival powers attacked each other with propaganda and economic measures*, *and with a general policy of non-cooperation*.

Both superpowers, the USA and the USSR, gathered allies around them: between 1945 and 1948 the USSR drew into its orbit most of the states of eastern Europe, as communist governments came to power in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia and East Germany (1949). A communist government was established in North Korea (1948), and the Communist bloc seemed to be further strengthened in 1949 when Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) was at last victorious in the long-drawn-out civil war in China. On the other hand, the USA hastened the recovery of Japan and fostered her as an ally, and worked closely with Britain and 14 other European countries, as well as with Turkey, providing them with vast economic aid in order to build up an anti-communist bloc.

Whatever one bloc suggested or did was viewed by the other as having ulterior and aggressive motives. There was a long wrangle, for example, over where the frontier between Poland and Germany should be, and no permanent settlement could be agreed on for Germany and Austria. Then in the mid-1950s, after the death of Stalin (1953), the new Russian leaders began to talk about 'peaceful coexistence', mainly to give the USSR a much-needed break from its economic and military burdens. The icy atmosphere between the two blocs began to thaw: in 1955 it was agreed to remove all occupying troops from Austria. However, relations did not improve sufficiently to allow agreement on Germany, and tensions mounted again over Vietnam and the Cuban missiles crisis (1962). The Cold War moved into a new phase in the later 1960s when both sides took initiatives to reduce tensions. Known as *détente,* this brought a marked improvement in international relations, including the signing of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty in 1972. *Détente* did not end superpower rivalry, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 heightened international tensions once more. The Cold War came to an end in 1989–91 with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

6.1 WHAT CAUSED THE COLD WAR?

(a) Differences of principle

The basic cause of conflict lay in the differences of principle between the communist states and the capitalist or liberal-democratic states.

- *The communist system* of organizing the state and society was based on the ideas of Karl Marx; he believed that the wealth of a country should be collectively owned and shared by everybody. The economy should be centrally planned and the interests and well-being of the working classes safeguarded by state social policies.
- *The capitalist system*, on the other hand, operates on the basis of private ownership of a country's wealth. The driving forces behind capitalism are private enterprise in the pursuit of making profits, and the preservation of the power of private wealth.

Ever since the world's first communist government was set up in Russia (the USSR) in 1917, the governments of most capitalist states viewed it with mistrust and were afraid of communism spreading to their countries. This would mean the end of the private ownership of wealth, as well as the loss of political power by the wealthy classes. When civil war broke out in Russia in 1918, several capitalist states – the USA, Britain, France and Japan – sent troops to Russia to help the anti-communist forces. The communists won the war, but Joseph Stalin, who became Russian leader in 1929, was convinced that there would be another attempt by the capitalist powers to destroy communism in Russia. The German invasion of Russia in 1941 proved him right. The need for self-preservation against Germany and Japan caused the USSR, the USA and Britain to forget their differences and work together, but as soon as the defeat of Germany was clearly only a matter of time, both sides, and especially Stalin, began to plan for the post-war period.

(b) Stalin's foreign policies contributed to the tensions

His aim was to take advantage of the military situation to strengthen Russian influence in Europe. As the Nazi armies collapsed, he tried to occupy as much German territory as he could, and to acquire as much land as he could get away with from countries such as Finland, Poland and Romania. In this he was highly successful, but the West was alarmed at what they took to be Soviet aggression; they believed that he was committed to spreading communism over as much of the globe as possible.

(c) US and British politicians were hostile to the Soviet government

During the war, the USA under President Roosevelt sent war materials of all kinds to Russia under a system known as 'Lend-Lease', and Roosevelt was inclined to trust Stalin. But after Roosevelt died, in April 1945, his successor Harry S. Truman was more suspicious and toughened his attitude towards the communists. Some historians believe that Truman's main motive for dropping the atomic bombs on Japan was not simply to defeat Japan, which was ready to surrender anyway, but to show Stalin what might happen to Russia if he dared go too far. Stalin suspected that the USA and Britain were still keen to destroy communism; he felt that their delay in launching the invasion of France, the Second Front (which did not take place until June 1944), was deliberately calculated to keep most of the pressure on the Russians and bring them to the point of exhaustion. Nor

did they tell Stalin about the existence of the atomic bomb until shortly before its use on Japan, and they rejected his request that Russia should share in the occupation of Japan. *Above all, the West had the atomic bomb and the USSR did not.*

1 Which side was to blame?

During the 1950s, most western historians, such as the American George Kennan (in his *Memoirs, 1925–50* (Bantam, 1969)), *blamed Stalin*. During the mid-1940s Kennan had worked at the US embassy in Moscow, and later (1952–3) he was US Ambassador in Moscow. He argued that Stalin's motives were sinister, and that he intended to spread communism as widely as possible through Europe and Asia, thus destroying capitalism. Kennan advised a policy of 'containment' of the USSR by political, economic and diplomatic means. The formation of NATO and the American entry into the Korean War in 1950 were the West's self-defence against communist aggression.

On the other hand, Soviet historians, and during the 1960s and early 1970s some American historians, argued that *the Cold War ought not to be blamed on Stalin and the Russians*. Their theory was that Russia had suffered enormous losses during the war, and therefore it was only to be expected that Stalin would try to make sure neighbouring states were friendly, given Russia's weakness in 1945. They believe that Stalin's motives were purely defensive and that there was no real threat to the West from the USSR. Some Americans claim that the USA should have been more understanding and should not have challenged the idea of a Soviet 'sphere of influence' in eastern Europe. The actions of American politicians, especially Truman, provoked Russian hostility unnecessarily. This is known among historians as the *revisionist* view; one of its leading proponents, William Appleman Williams, believed that the Cold War was mainly caused by the USA's determination to make the most of its atomic monopoly and its industrial strength in its drive for world hegemony.

The main reason behind this new view was that during the late 1960s many people in the USA became critical of American foreign policy, especially American involvement in the Vietnam War. This caused some historians to reconsider the American attitude towards communism in general; they felt that American governments had become obsessed with hostility towards communist states and they were ready to take a more sympathetic view of the difficulties Stalin had found himself in at the end of the Second World War.

Later a third view – known as the *post-revisionist* interpretation – was put forward by some American historians, and this became popular in the 1980s. They had the benefit of being able to look at lots of new documents and visit archives which had not been open to earlier historians. The new evidence suggested that the situation at the end of the war was far more complicated than earlier historians had realized; this led them to take a middle view, arguing that *both sides should take some blame for the Cold War*. They believe that American economic policies such as Marshall Aid were deliberately designed to increase US political influence in Europe. However, they also believe that although Stalin had no long-term plans to spread communism, he was an opportunist who would take advantage of any weakness in the West to expand Soviet influence. The crude Soviet methods of forcing communist governments on the states of eastern Europe were bound to lend proof to claims that Stalin's aims were expansionist. With their entrenched positions and deep suspicions of each other, the USA and the USSR created an atmosphere in which every international act could be interpreted in two ways. What was claimed as necessary for self-defence by one side was taken by the other as evidence of aggressive intent, as the events described in the next section show. But at least open war was avoided, because the Americans were reluctant to use the atomic bomb again unless attacked directly, while the Russians dared not risk such an attack.

When the Cold War came to an end with the collapse of eastern European communism and the Soviet Union in 1989–91, a number of new Cold War histories appeared reviewing both its causes and effects. In 2006 John Lewis Gaddis restated his belief that Russian attempts to dominate the world had been the cause. American policy had been right because it ended in victory, for which Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher must take much of the credit: 'the universal acceptance of capitalism, the discrediting of dictatorships and the globalisation of democratisation under benevolent American leadership'. In the same year O. A. Westad set out the rival view: he pointed out that the collapse of communism stemmed from the decision of the Chinese communists to abandon socialist economics and change to a form of capitalism, albeit a different one from that in the West. The Chinese had been pressurising other communist states to do the same; it was this, together with the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan from 1979 onwards, that weakened and finally brought down the USSR.

6.2 HOW DID THE COLD WAR DEVELOP BETWEEN 1945 AND 1953?

(a) The Yalta Conference (February 1945)

This was held in Russia (in the Crimea) and was attended by the three Allied leaders, Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, so that they could plan what was to happen when the war ended. *At the time it seemed to be a success*, *agreement being reached on several points*.

- A new organization – to be called *the United Nations* – should be set up to replace the failed League of Nations.
- *Germany was to be divided into zones* – Russian, American and British (a French zone was included later) – while Berlin (which happened to be in the middle of the Russian zone) would also be split into corresponding zones. Similar arrangements were to be made for Austria.
- Free elections would be allowed in the states of eastern Europe.
- Stalin promised to join the war against Japan on condition that Russia received the whole of Sakhalin Island and some territory in Manchuria.

However, there were ominous *signs of trouble over what was to be done with Poland*. When the Russian armies swept through Poland, driving the Germans back, they had set up a communist government in Lublin, even though there was already a Polish government-in-exile in London. It was agreed at Yalta that some members (non-communist) of the London-based government should be allowed to join the Lublin government, while in return Russia would be allowed to keep a strip of eastern Poland which she had annexed in 1939. However, Roosevelt and Churchill were not happy about Stalin's demands that Poland should be given all German territory east of the rivers Oder and Neisse; no agreement was reached on this point.

(b) The Potsdam Conference (July 1945)

The atmosphere here was distinctly cooler. The three leaders at the beginning of the conference were Stalin, Truman (replacing Roosevelt, who had died in April) and Churchill, but Churchill was replaced by Clement Attlee, the new British Labour prime minister, after Labour's election victory.

The war with Germany was over, *but no agreement was reached about her long-term future*. The big questions were whether, or when, the four zones would be allowed to join

together to form a united country again. She was to be disarmed, the Nazi party would be disbanded and its leaders tried as war criminals. It was agreed that the Germans should pay something towards repairing the damage they had caused during the war. Most of these payments (known as 'reparations') were to go to the USSR, which would be allowed to take non-food goods from their own zone and from the other zones as well, provided the Russians sent food supplies to the western zones of Germany in return.

It was over Poland that the main disagreement occurred. Truman and Churchill were annoyed because Germany east of the Oder–Neisse Line had been occupied by Russian troops and was being run by the pro-communist Polish government, which expelled some five million Germans living in the area; this had not been agreed at Yalta (see Map 6.1). Truman did not inform Stalin about the exact nature of the atomic bomb, though Churchill was told about it. A few days after the conference closed, the two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan and the war ended quickly on 10 August without the need for Russian help (though the Russians had declared war on Japan on 8 August and invaded Manchuria). They annexed south Sakhalin as agreed at Yalta, but they were allowed no part in the occupation of Japan.

(c) Communism established in eastern Europe

In the months following Potsdam, the Russians systematically interfered in the countries of eastern Europe to set up pro-communist governments. This happened in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania and Romania. In some cases their opponents were imprisoned or murdered; in Hungary for example, the Russians allowed free elections; but although the communists won less than 20 per cent of the votes, they saw to it that a majority of the cabinet were communists. Stalin frightened the West further by a widely reported speech in February 1946 in which he said that communism and capitalism could never live peacefully together, and that future wars were inevitable until the final victory of communism was achieved. However, Russian historians have claimed that the speech was reported in the west in a misleading and biased way, especially by George Kennan, who was the US *chargé d'affaires* in Moscow.

Churchill responded to all this in a speech of his own at Fulton, Missouri (USA), in March 1946, in which he repeated a phrase he had used earlier: 'From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, *an iron curtain has descended across the continent*' (see Map 6.2). Claiming that the Russians were bent on 'indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines', he called for *a Western alliance* which would stand firm against the communist threat. The speech drew a sharp response from Stalin, who revealed his fears about Germany and the need to strengthen Soviet security. The rift between East and West was steadily widening and Stalin was able to denounce Churchill as a 'warmonger'. But not everybody in the West agreed with Churchill – over a hundred British Labour MPs signed a motion criticizing the Conservative leader for his attitude.

(d) The Russians continued to tighten their grip on eastern Europe

By the end of 1947 every state in that area with the exception of Czechoslovakia had a fully communist government. Elections were rigged, non-communist members of coalition governments were expelled, many were arrested and executed and eventually all other political parties were dissolved. All this took place under the watchful eyes of secret police and Russian troops. In addition, Stalin treated the Russian zone of Germany as if it were Russian territory, allowing only the Communist Party and draining it of vital resources.

Land taken by Poland from Germany: territory east of the *Oder–Neisse* line and part of East Prussia

Land acquired by the USSR during the war

Occupation zones in Germany and Austria:

1 Russian 3 French
2 British 4 American

Map 6.1 **Europe after 1945**

Map 6.2 **Central and eastern Europe during the Cold War**

Source: D. Heater, Our World This Century (Oxford, 1992), p. 129

Only Yugoslavia did not fit the pattern: here the communist government of Marshal Tito had been legally elected in 1945. Tito had won the election because of his immense prestige as leader of the anti-German resistance; it was Tito's forces, not the Russians, who had liberated Yugoslavia from German occupation, and Tito resented Stalin's attempts to interfere.

The West was profoundly irritated by Russia's treatment of eastern Europe, which disregarded Stalin's promise of free elections, made at Yalta. And yet they ought not to

have been surprised at what was happening: even Churchill had agreed with Stalin in 1944 that much of eastern Europe should be a Russian sphere of influence. Stalin could argue that friendly governments in neighbouring states were necessary for self-defence, that these states had never had democratic governments anyway, and that communism would bring much-needed progress to backward countries. It was Stalin's methods of gaining control which upset the West, and they gave rise to the next major developments.

(e) The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan

1 The Truman Doctrine

This sprang from events in Greece, where communists were trying to overthrow the monarchy. British troops, who had helped liberate Greece from the Germans in 1944, had restored the monarchy, but they were now feeling the strain of supporting it against the communists, who were receiving help from Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, appealed to the USA and Truman announced (March 1947) that the USA 'would support free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures'. Greece immediately received massive amounts of arms and other supplies, and by 1949 the communists were defeated. Turkey, which also seemed under threat, received aid worth about $60 million. The Truman Doctrine made it clear that the USA had no intention of returning to isolation as she had after the First World War; she was committed to *a policy of containing communism*, not just in Europe, but throughout the world, including Korea and Vietnam.

2 The Marshall Plan

Announced in June 1947, this was an economic extension of the Truman Doctrine. American Secretary of State George Marshall produced his *European Recovery Programme (ERP)*, which offered economic and financial help wherever it was needed. 'Our policy', he declared, 'is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos.' Western Europe was certainly suffering from all of these problems, exacerbated by the coldest winter for almost 70 years (1947–8). One of the aims of the ERP was to promote the economic recovery of Europe, but there was more behind it than humanitarian feeling. A prosperous Europe would provide lucrative markets for American exports; but its main aim was probably political: communism was less likely to gain control in a flourishing western Europe. By September, 16 nations (Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and the western zones of Germany) had drawn up a joint plan for using American aid. During the next four years over $13 billion of Marshall Aid flowed into western Europe, fostering the recovery of agriculture and industry, which in many countries were in chaos because of war devastation. During the same period the communist parties in western Europe suffered electoral defeat, most notably in France and Italy, which had seemed the most likely states to go communist.

Most American historians have claimed that Europe's rapid recovery from impending economic and political disaster was due entirely to the Marshall Plan, which was held up as a perfect example of humanitarian intervention. In his history of the Plan, published in 2008, Greg Behrman follows the same line: Marshall and his assistants were heroes and America saved Europe from economic disaster and a communist takeover. In another 2008 publication, Nicolaus Mills also sees the Plan as a model of how to go about helping states struggling with exhaustion, poverty and economic chaos. However, he admits that European leaders themselves played an important part in their countries' recovery. In fact, European historians have rejected the view that Europe was saved solely by the Marshall Plan. They point out that European economies recovered so quickly after 1947 that the

conditions for recovery must already have been in place. Although $13 billion sounds an awful lot of money, Marshall Aid averaged only about 2.5 per cent of the total national income of the 16 countries involved. This raises the question: if Marshall Aid had not been available, would western Europe have turned communist, either from electoral choice or by Soviet invasion? The overwhelming evidence suggests that the communists' popularity was already in decline before American aid began to arrive. And most historians agree that Stalin was more concerned to protect Soviet security than to start launching wholesale invasions of western Europe.

The Russians were well aware that there was more to Marshall Aid than pure benevolence. Although in theory aid was available for eastern Europe, Russian Foreign Minister Molotov denounced the whole idea as 'dollar imperialism'. He saw it as a blatant American device for gaining control of western Europe, and worse still, for interfering in eastern Europe, which Stalin considered to be Russia's sphere of influence. The USSR rejected the offer, and neither her satellite states nor Czechoslovakia, which was showing interest, was allowed to take advantage of it. *The 'iron curtain' seemed a reality*, and the next development only served to strengthen it.

(f) The Cominform

This – the Communist Information Bureau – was the Soviet response to the Marshall Plan. Set up by Stalin in September 1947, it was an organization to draw together the various European communist parties. All the satellite states were members, and the French and Italian communist parties were represented. Stalin's aim was to tighten his grip on the satellites: to be communist was not enough – *it must be Russian-style communism*. Eastern Europe was to be industrialized, collectivized and centralized; states were expected to trade primarily with Cominform members, and all contacts with non-communist countries were discouraged. When Yugoslavia objected she was expelled from the Cominform (1948), though she remained communist. In 1947 *the Molotov Plan* was introduced, offering Russian aid to the satellites. Another organization, known as *Comecon (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance)*, was set up to co-ordinate their economic policies.

(g) The communist takeover of Czechoslovakia (February 1948)

This came as a great blow to the Western bloc, because it was the only remaining democratic state in eastern Europe. There was a coalition government of communists and other left-wing parties, which had been freely elected in 1946. The communists had won 38 per cent of the votes and 114 seats in the 300-seat parliament, and they held a third of the cabinet posts. The prime minister, Klement Gottwald, was a communist; President Benes˘ and the foreign minister, Jan Masaryk, were not; they hoped that Czechoslovakia, with its highly developed industries, would *remain as a bridge between east and west*.

However, a crisis arose early in 1948. Elections were due in May, and all the signs were that the communists would lose ground; they were blamed for the Czech rejection of Marshall Aid, which might have eased the continuing food shortages. The communists decided to act before the elections; already in control of the unions and the police, they seized power in an armed coup. All non-communist ministers with the exception of Benes˘ and Masaryk resigned. A few days later Masaryk's body was found under the windows of his offices. His death was officially described as suicide. However, when the archives were opened after the collapse of communism in 1989, documents were found which proved beyond doubt that he had been murdered. The elections were held in May but there was only a single list of candidates – all communists. Benes˘ resigned and Gottwald became president.

The western powers and the UN protested but felt unable to take any action because they could not prove Russian involvement – the coup was purely an internal affair. However, there can be little doubt that Stalin, disapproving of Czech connections with the West and of the interest in Marshall Aid, had prodded the Czech communists into action. Nor was it just coincidence that several of the Russian divisions occupying Austria were moved up to the Czech frontier. The bridge between East and West was gone; *the 'iron curtain' was complete*.

(h) The Berlin blockade and airlift (June 1948–May 1949)

This brought the Cold War to its first great crisis. It arose out of *disagreements over the treatment of Germany*.

- At the end of the war, as agreed at Yalta and Potsdam, *Germany and Berlin were each divided into four zones*. While the three western powers did their best to organize the economic and political recovery of their zones, Stalin, determined to make Germany pay for all the damage inflicted on Russia, treated his zone as a satellite, *draining its resources away to Russia*.
- Early in 1948 the three western zones were merged to form a single economic unit, whose prosperity, thanks to Marshall Aid, was in marked contrast to the poverty of the Russian zone. The West wanted all four zones to be re-united and given self-government as soon as possible; but Stalin had decided that it would be safer for Russia if he kept the Russian zone separate, with its own communist, pro-Russian government. The prospect of the three western zones re-uniting was alarming enough to Stalin, because he knew they would be part of the Western bloc.
- In June 1948 the West introduced a new currency and ended price controls in their zone and in West Berlin. The Russians decided that the situation in Berlin had become impossible. Already irritated by what they saw as an island of capitalism a hundred miles inside the communist zone, they felt it impossible to have two different currencies in the same city, and they were embarrassed by the contrast between the prosperity of West Berlin and the poverty of the surrounding area.

The Russian response was immediate: *all road, rail and canal links between West Berlin and West Germany were closed*; their aim was to force the West to withdraw from West Berlin by reducing it to starvation point. The western powers, convinced that a retreat would be the prelude to a Russian attack on West Germany, were determined to hold on. They decided to fly supplies in, rightly judging that the Russians would not risk shooting down the transport planes. Truman had thoughtfully sent a fleet of B-29 bombers to be positioned on British airfields. Over the next ten months, 2 million tons of supplies were airlifted to the blockaded city in a remarkable operation which kept the 2.5 million West Berliners fed and warm right through the winter. In May 1949 the Russians admitted failure by lifting the blockade.

The affair had important results:

- The outcome gave a great psychological boost to the western powers, though it brought relations with Russia to their worst ever.
- It caused the western powers to co-ordinate their defences by the formation of NATO.
- It meant that since no compromise was possible, Germany was doomed to remain divided for the foreseeable future.

(i) The formation of NATO

The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took place in April 1949. The Berlin blockade showed the West's military unreadiness and frightened them into making definite preparations. Already in March 1948, Britain, France, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg had signed *the Brussels Defence Treaty*, promising military collaboration in case of war. Now they were joined by the USA, Canada, Portugal, Denmark, Iceland, Italy and Norway. All signed *the North Atlantic Treaty*, agreeing to regard an attack on any one of them as an attack on them all, and placing their defence forces under a joint NATO command organization which would co-ordinate the defence of the west. This was a highly significant development: the Americans had abandoned their traditional policy of 'no entangling alliances' and for the first time had pledged themselves in advance to military action. Predictably Stalin took it as a challenge, and tensions remained high.

(j) The two Germanies

Since there was no prospect of the Russians allowing a united Germany, the western powers went ahead alone and set up *the German Federal Republic*, *known as West Germany (August 1949)*. Elections were held and Konrad Adenauer became the first Chancellor. The Russians replied by setting up their zone as *the German Democratic Republic*, *or East Germany (October 1949)*. Germany remained divided until the collapse of communism in East Germany (November–December 1989) made it possible early in 1990 to re-unite the two states into a single Germany.

(k) More nuclear weapons

When it became known in September 1949 that the USSR had successfully exploded an atomic bomb, an arms race began to develop. Truman responded by giving the go-ahead for the USA to produce *a hydrogen bomb* many times more powerful than the atomic bomb. His defence advisers produced a secret document, known as NSC-68 (April 1950), which shows that they had come to regard the Russians as fanatics who would stop at nothing to spread communism all over the world. They suggested that expenditure on armaments should be more than tripled in an attempt to defeat communism.

It was not only the Russians who alarmed the Americans: *a communist government was proclaimed in China (October 1949)* after the communist leader Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) had defeated Chiang Kai-shek, the nationalist leader, who had been supported by the USA and who was now forced to flee to the island of Taiwan (Formosa). *When the USSR and communist China signed a treaty of alliance in February 1950*, American fears of an advancing tide of communism seemed about to be realized. It was in this atmosphere of American anxiety that the Cold War spotlight now shifted to Korea, where, in June 1950, troops from communist North Korea invaded non-communist South Korea.

6.3 TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THERE A THAW AFTER 1953?

There is no doubt that in some ways East–West relations did begin to improve during 1953, though there were still areas of disagreement and the thaw was not a consistent development.

(a) Reasons for the thaw

1 The death of Stalin

The death of Stalin was probably the starting point of the thaw, because it brought to the forefront new Russian leaders – Malenkov, Bulganin and Khrushchev – who wanted to improve relations with the USA. Their reasons were possibly connected with the fact that by August 1953 the Russians as well as the Americans had developed a hydrogen bomb: the two sides were now so finely balanced that international tensions had to be relaxed if nuclear war was to be avoided.

Nikita Khrushchev explained the new policy in a famous speech (February 1956) in which he criticized Stalin and said that *'peaceful coexistence' with the West was not only possible but essential*: 'there are only two ways – either peaceful coexistence or the most destructive war in history. There is no third way.' This did not mean that Khrushchev had given up the idea of a communist-dominated world; this would still come, but it would be achieved when the western powers recognized the superiority of the Soviet economic system, not when they were defeated in war. In the same way, he hoped to win neutral states over to communism by lavish economic aid.

2 McCarthy discredited

Anti-communist feelings in the USA, which had been stirred up by Senator Joseph McCarthy, began to moderate when McCarthy was discredited in 1954. It had gradually become clear that McCarthy himself was something of a fanatic, and when he began to accuse leading generals of having communist sympathies, he had gone too far. The Senate condemned him by a large majority and he foolishly attacked the new Republican President Eisenhower for supporting the Senate. Soon afterwards Eisenhower announced that the American people wanted to be friendly with the Soviet people.

(b) How did the thaw show itself?

1 The first signs

- The signing of the peace agreement at Panmunjom ended the Korean War in July 1953.
- The following year the war in Indo-China ended.

2 The Russians made important concessions in 1955

- They agreed to give up their military bases in Finland.
- They lifted their veto on the admission of 16 new member states to the UN.
- The quarrel with Yugoslavia was healed when Khrushchev paid a visit to Tito.
- The Cominform was abandoned, suggesting more freedom for the satellite states.

3 The signing of the Austrian State Treaty (May 1955)

This was the most important development in the thaw. At the end of the war in 1945, Austria was divided into four zones of occupation, with the capital, Vienna, in the Russian zone. Unlike Germany, she was allowed her own government because she was viewed not as a defeated enemy but as a state liberated from the Nazis. The Austrian government had only limited powers, and the problem was similar to the one in Germany: whereas the three western occupying powers organized the recovery of their zones, the Russians insisted on squeezing reparations, mainly in the form

of food supplies, from theirs. No permanent settlement seemed likely, but early in 1955 the Russians were persuaded, mainly by the Austrian government, to be more co-operative. They were also afraid of a merger between West Germany and western Austria.

As a result of the agreement, all occupying troops were withdrawn and Austria became independent, with her 1937 frontiers. She was not to unite with Germany, her armed forces were strictly limited and she was to remain neutral in any dispute between East and West. This meant that she could not join either NATO or the European Economic Community. One point the Austrians were unhappy about was the loss of the German-speaking area of the South Tyrol, which Italy was allowed to keep.

(c) The thaw was only partial

Khrushchev's policy was a curious mixture, which western leaders often found difficult to understand. While making the conciliatory moves just described, he was quick to respond to anything which seemed to be a threat to the East, and he had no intention of relaxing Russia's grip on the satellite states. The Hungarians discovered this to their cost in 1956 when *a rising in Budapest against the communist government was ruthlessly crushed by Russian tanks*. Sometimes he seemed to be prepared to see how far he could push the Americans before they stood up to him:

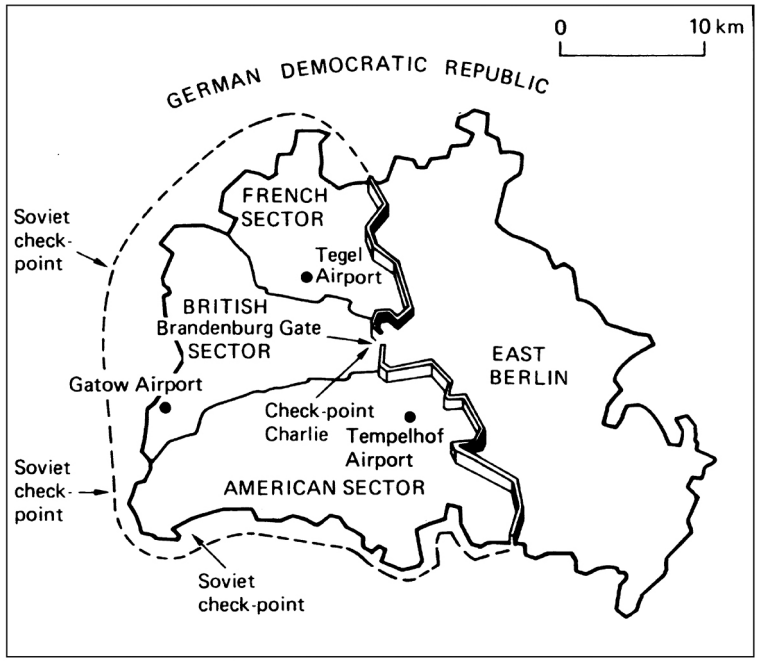
- *The Warsaw Pact (1955)* was signed between Russia and her satellite states shortly after West Germany was admitted to NATO. The Pact was a mutual defence agreement, which the West took as a gesture against West Germany's membership of NATO.
- The Russians continued to build up their nuclear armaments.
- The situation in Berlin caused more tension.
- The most provocative action of all was when Khrushchev installed Soviet missiles in Cuba, less than a hundred miles from the American coast (1962).

1 The situation in Berlin

The western powers were still refusing to give official recognition to the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), which the Russians had set up in response to the creation of West Germany in 1949. In 1958, perhaps encouraged by the USSR's apparent lead in some areas of the nuclear arms race, Khrushchev announced that the USSR no longer recognized the rights of the western powers in West Berlin. When the Americans made it clear that they would resist any attempt to push them out, Khrushchev did not press the point.

In 1960 it was Khrushchev's turn to feel aggrieved when an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over a thousand miles inside Russia. President Eisenhower declined to apologize, defending America's right to make reconnaissance flights. Khrushchev stormed out of the summit conference which was just beginning in Paris, and it seemed that the thaw might be over.

In 1961 Khrushchev again suggested, this time to the new American president, John F. Kennedy, that the West should withdraw from Berlin. The communists were embarrassed at the large numbers of refugees escaping from East Germany into West Berlin – these averaged about 200 000 a year and totalled over 3 million since 1945. When Kennedy refused, *the Berlin Wall was erected (August 1961)*, a 28-mile-long monstrosity across the entire city, effectively blocking the escape route.



Map 6.3 **Berlin and the wall, 1961**

6.4 THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE AND THE CUBAN MISSILES CRISIS (1962)

(a) The arms race begins to accelerate

The arms race between East and West arguably began in earnest towards the end of 1949 *after the Russians had produced their own atomic bomb*. The Americans already had a big lead in bombs of this type, but the Russians were determined to catch up, even though the production of nuclear weapons placed an enormous strain on their economy. When *the Americans made the much more powerful hydrogen bomb* towards the end of 1952, the Russians did the same the following year, and had soon developed a bomber with a range long enough to reach the USA.

The Americans remained well ahead in numbers of nuclear bombs and bombers, but it was the Russians who took the lead in August 1957 when they produced *a new type of weapon – the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)*. This was a nuclear warhead carried by a rocket so powerful that it could reach the USA even when fired from inside the USSR. Not to be outdone, the Americans soon produced their version of an ICBM (known as Atlas), and before long they had many more than the Russians. The Americans also began to build nuclear missiles with a shorter range; these were known as Jupiters and Thors, and they could reach the USSR from launching sites in Europe and Turkey. When *the Russians successfully launched the world's first earth satellite (Sputnik 1) in 1958*, the Americans again felt that they dared not be left behind; within a few months they had launched an earth satellite of their own.

(b) The Cuban missiles crisis, 1962

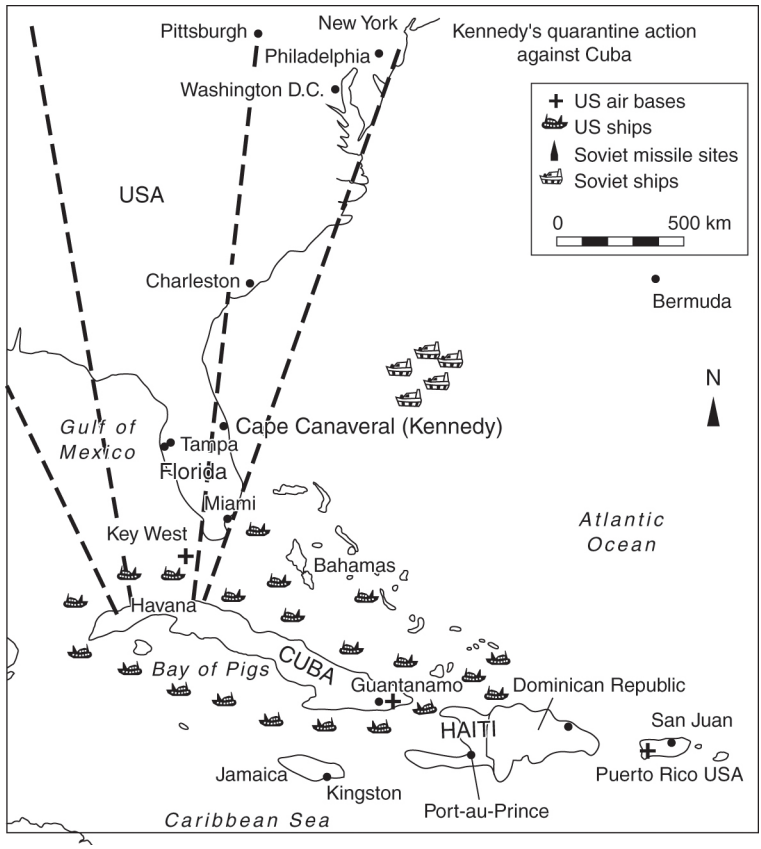
Cuba became involved in the Cold War in 1959 when Fidel Castro, who had just seized power from the corrupt, American-backed dictator Batista, outraged the USA by nationalizing American-owned estates and factories. As Cuba's relations with the USA worsened, those with the USSR improved: in January 1961 *the USA broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba*, and the Russians increased their economic aid.

Convinced that Cuba was now a communist state in all but name, the new US president, John F. Kennedy, approved a plan by a group of Batista supporters to invade Cuba from American bases in Guatemala (Central America). The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), a kind of secret service, was deeply involved. There was a general view in the USA at this time that it was quite permissible for them to interfere in the affairs of sovereign states and to overthrow any regimes which they felt were hostile and too close for comfort (see Chapter 26). The small invading force of about 1400 men landed at *the Bay of Pigs* in April 1961, but the operation was so badly planned and carried out that Castro's forces and his two jet planes had no difficulty crushing it. Later the same year, *Castro announced that he was now a Marxist and that Cuba was a socialist country*. Kennedy continued his campaign to destroy Castro, in various ways: Cuban merchant ships were sunk, installations on the island were sabotaged and American troops carried out invasion exercises. Castro appealed to the USSR for military help.

Khrushchev decided to set up nuclear missile launchers in Cuba aimed at the USA, whose nearest point was less than a hundred miles from Cuba. He intended to install missiles with a range of up to 2000 miles, which meant that all the major cities of the central and eastern USA such as New York, Washington, Chicago and Boston would be under threat. This was a risky decision, and there was great consternation in the USA when, in October 1962, photographs taken from spy planes showed a missile base under construction (see Map 6.4). *Why did Khrushchev take such a risky decision?*

- The Russians had lost the lead in ICBMs, so this was a way of trying to seize the initiative back again from the USA. But it would be wrong to put all the blame for the crisis on the USSR.
- In 1959 the Americans had signed an agreement with Turkey allowing them to deploy Jupiter nuclear missiles from bases in Turkey. This was *before* any top-level contacts between Castro and the Russians had taken place. As Khrushchev himself put it in his memoirs, 'the Americans had surrounded our country with military bases, now they would learn what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you'.
- It was a gesture of solidarity with his ally Castro, who was under constant threat from the USA; although the Bay of Pigs invasion had been a miserable failure, it was not the end of the US threat to Castro – in November 1961 Kennedy gave the go-ahead for a secret CIA operation known as Operation Mongoose which aimed to 'help Cuba overthrow the Communist regime'. Hopefully, the Russian missiles would dissuade such an operation; if not, they could be used against invading American troops.
- It would test the resolve of the new, young, American President Kennedy.
- Perhaps Khrushchev intended to use the missiles for bargaining with the West over removal of American missiles from Europe, or a withdrawal from Berlin by the West.

Kennedy's military advisers urged him to launch air strikes against the bases. General Maxwell Taylor urged Kennedy to launch a full-scale invasion of Cuba; but he acted more cautiously: he alerted American troops, began a blockade of Cuba to keep out the 25



Map 6.4 **The Cuban missiles crisis, 1962**

Russian ships which were bringing missiles to Cuba and demanded the dismantling of the missile sites and the removal of those missiles already in Cuba. The situation was tense, and the world seemed to be on the verge of nuclear war. The Secretary-General of the UN, U Thant, appealed to both sides for restraint.

Khrushchev made the first move: he ordered the Russian ships to turn back, and eventually a compromise solution was reached. Khrushchev promised to remove the missiles and dismantle the sites; in return Kennedy promised that the USA would not invade Cuba again, and undertook to disarm the Jupiter missiles in Turkey (though he would not allow this to be announced publicly). Castro was furious with Khrushchev for 'deserting' him apparently without consulting the Cubans, and Cuban–Soviet relations were extremely cool for several years.

The crisis had only lasted a few days, *but it was extremely tense and it had important results*. Both sides could claim to have gained something, but most important was that both sides realized how easily a nuclear war could have started and how terrible the results would have been. It seemed to bring them both to their senses and produced a marked relaxation of tension. *A telephone link (the 'hotline') was introduced between Moscow and Washington* to allow swift consultations, and in July 1963, the USSR, the USA and Britain signed *a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty*, agreeing to carry out nuclear tests only underground to avoid polluting the atmosphere any further.

At first Kennedy's handling of the crisis was highly praised. Most American commentators argued that by standing up to the Russians and by resisting pressure from his own

army Chiefs of Staff for a military response, Kennedy defused the crisis and achieved a peaceful settlement. The president's brother Robert was one of his chief supporters, particularly in his book *Thirteen Days* (1969). In order to lay all the blame for the crisis on the USSR, the Americans emphasized that Khrushchev and various Russian diplomats had repeatedly lied, insisting that they had no intention of building missile bases in Cuba. However, some later historians were more critical of Kennedy. A few accused him of missing a chance to solve the problem of Cuba once and for all – he ought to have called Khrushchev's bluff, attacked Cuba and overthrown Castro. Others criticized Kennedy for causing the crisis in the first place by placing nuclear missiles in Turkey and repeatedly trying to destabilize the Castro regime. It was also pointed out that since Soviet long-range missiles could already reach the USA from Russia itself, the missiles in Cuba did not exactly pose a new threat.

(c) The race continues into the 1970s

Although in public the Russians claimed the outcome of the missiles crisis as a victory, in private they admitted that their main aim – to establish missile bases near the USA – had failed. Even the removal of American Thors and Jupiters from Turkey meant nothing because the Americans now had another threat – *ballistic missiles (known as Polaris, later Poseidon) which could be launched from submarines (SLBMs)* in the eastern Mediterranean.

The Russians now decided to go all-out to catch up with the American stockpile of ICBMs and SLBMs. Their motive was not just to increase their own security: they hoped that if they could get somewhere near equality with the Americans, there would be a good chance of persuading them to limit and reduce the arms build-up. As the Americans became more deeply involved in the war in Vietnam (1961–75), they had less to spend on nuclear weapons, and slowly but surely the Russians began to catch up. By the early 1970s they had overtaken the USA and her allies in numbers of ICBMs and SLBMs. They had brought out a new weapon, *the anti-ballistic missile (ABM)*, which could destroy incoming enemy missiles before they reached their targets.

However, the Americans were ahead in other departments – they had developed an even more terrifying weapon, *the multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV)*; this was a missile which could carry as many as 14 separate warheads, each one of which could be programmed to hit a different target. The Russians soon developed their version of the MIRV, known as the SS-20 (1977). These were targeted on western Europe, but were not as sophisticated as the American MIRV and carried only three warheads.

At the end of the 1970s the Americans responded by developing *Cruise missiles, which were based in Europe*; the new refinement was that these missiles flew in at low altitudes and so were able to penetrate under Russian radar.

And so it went on; by this time both sides had enough of this horrifying weaponry to destroy the world many times over. The main danger was that one side or the other might be tempted to try and win a nuclear war by striking first and destroying all the other side's weapons before they had time to retaliate.

(d) Protests against nuclear weapons

People in many countries were worried at the way the major powers continued to pile up nuclear weapons and failed to make any progress towards controlling them. Movements were set up to try to persuade governments to abolish nuclear weapons.

In Britain *the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)*, which was started in 1958, put pressure on the government to take the lead, so that Britain would be the first nation to abandon nuclear weapons; this was known as *unilateral disarmament* (disarmament by one state only). They hoped that the USA and the USSR would follow Britain's lead and scrap their nuclear weapons too. They held mass demonstrations and rallies, and every year at Easter they held a protest march from London to Aldermaston (where there was an atomic weapons research base) and back.

No British government dared take the risk, however. They believed that unilateral disarmament would leave Britain vulnerable to a nuclear attack from the USSR, and would only consider abandoning their weapons as part of a general agreement by all the major powers (*multilateral disarmament*). During the 1980s there were protest demonstrations in many European countries, including West Germany and Holland, and also in the USA. In Britain many women protested by camping around the American base at Greenham Common (Berkshire), where the Cruise missiles were positioned. The fear was that if the Americans ever fired any of these missiles, Britain could be almost destroyed by Russian nuclear retaliation. In the long run, perhaps the enormity of it all and the protest movements did play a part in bringing both sides to the negotiating table. And so the world moved into the next phase of the Cold War – *détente*.

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Chapter

7

The spread of communism outside Europe and its effects on international relations

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Although the first communist state was set up in Europe (in Russia in 1917), communism was not confined to Europe; it later spread to Asia where several other communist states emerged, each with its own brand of Marxism. As early as 1921, encouraged by the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had been formed. At first it co-operated with the Kuomintang (KMT), the party trying to govern China and to control the generals, who were struggling among themselves for power. As the KMT established its control over more of China, it felt strong enough to do without the help of the communists and tried to destroy them. Civil war developed between the KMT and the CCP.

The situation became more complex when the Japanese occupied the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931 and invaded other parts of China in 1937. When the Second World War ended in the defeat and withdrawal of the Japanese, the KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek, with American help, and the communists under their leader Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung) were still fighting it out. At last, *in 1949, Mao triumphed*, and Chiang and his supporters fled to the island of Taiwan (Formosa); the second major country had followed Russia into communism. In 1951 the Chinese invaded and occupied neighbouring Tibet; an uprising by the Tibetans in 1959 was crushed, and the country has remained under Chinese rule ever since.

Meanwhile communism had also gained a hold in **Korea**, which had been controlled by Japan since 1910. After the Japanese defeat in 1945, the country was divided into two zones: the north occupied by the Russians, the south by the Americans. The Russians set up a communist government in their zone, and since no agreement could be reached on what government to have for the whole country, Korea, like Germany, remained divided into two states. *In 1950 communist North Korea invaded South Korea*. United Nations forces (mostly American) moved in to help the south, while the Chinese helped the north. After much advancing and retreating, the war ended in 1953 with South Korea still non-communist.

In **Cuba**, early in 1959, Fidel Castro drove out the corrupt dictator Batista. Although Castro was not a communist to begin with, the Americans soon turned against him, particularly in 1962 when they discovered that Russian missiles were based on the island. These were later removed after a tense Cold War crisis which brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

In **Vietnam**, a similar situation to that in Korea occurred after the Vietnamese had won their independence from France (1954): the country was divided, temporarily it was thought, into north (communist) and south (non-communist). When a rebellion broke out in the south against a corrupt government, communist North Vietnam gave military assistance to the rebels; the Americans became heavily involved, supporting the South Vietnamese government to stop the spread of communism. In 1973 the

Americans withdrew from the struggle, following which the South Vietnamese forces rapidly collapsed, and the whole country became united under a communist government (1975). Before the end of the year, neighbouring **Cambodia** and **Laos** had also become communist.

In **South America**, which had a tradition of right-wing military dictatorships, communism made little headway, except in **Chile**, where in 1970 a Marxist government was democratically elected, with Salvador Allende as president. This was an interesting but short-lived experiment, since in 1973 the government was overthrown and Allende killed.

Africa saw the establishment of governments with strong Marxist connections in **Mozambique** (1975) and **Angola** (1976), both of which had just succeeded in winning independence from Portugal. This caused more western alarm and interference.

During the second half of the 1970s a more consistent thaw in the Cold War began, with *the period known as détente (a more permanent relaxation of tensions)*. There were several hiccups, however, such as the Russian invasion of Afghanistan (1979), before Mikhail Gorbachev (who became Russian leader in March 1985) made a really determined effort to end the Cold War altogether, and some arms limitations agreements were signed.

Then the international situation changed dramatically: in 1989 communism began to collapse in eastern Europe; by 1991 the communist bloc had disintegrated and East and West Germany were re-united. Even the USSR split up and ceased to be communist. Although communism still remained in China, Vietnam and North Korea, the Cold War was well and truly over.

7.1 THE WAR IN KOREA AND ITS EFFECTS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

(a) Background to the war

The origins of the war lay in the fact that Korea had been under Japanese occupation since 1910. When the Japanese were defeated (August 1945), the USA and the USSR agreed to divide the country into two zones along the 38th parallel (the 38-degree-north line of latitude), so that they could jointly organize the Japanese surrender and withdrawal – Russia in the north (which had a frontier with the USSR) and the Americans in the south. As far as the Americans were concerned, it was not intended to be a permanent division. The United Nations wanted free elections for the whole country and the Americans agreed, believing that since their zone contained two-thirds of the population, the communist north would be outvoted. However, the unification of Korea, like that of Germany, soon became part of Cold War rivalry: no agreement could be reached, and the artificial division continued (see Map 7.1).

Elections were held in the south, supervised by the UN, and *the independent Republic of Korea, or South Korea* was set up with Syngman Rhee as president and its capital at Seoul (August 1948). The following month, the Russians created *the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea* under the communist government of Kim Il Sung, with its capital at Pyongyang. In 1949 Russian and American troops were withdrawn, leaving a potentially dangerous situation: most Koreans bitterly resented the artificial division forced on their country by outsiders, but both leaders claimed the right to rule the whole country. Before very long it was clear that Syngman Rhee was a ruthless authoritarian, while Kim Il Sung was even worse: he seemed to be modelling himself on Stalin, arresting and executing many of his critics. Without warning, North Korean troops invaded South Korea in June 1950.

Map 7.1 **The war in Korea**

(b) Why did the North Koreans invade the South?

Even now it is still not clear how the attack originated, or whose idea it was. *The following suggestions have been offered*:

- It was Kim Il Sung's own idea, possibly encouraged by a statement made by Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State, earlier in 1950. Acheson was talking about which areas around the Pacific the USA intended to defend, and for some reason he did not include Korea.
- Kim Il Sung may have been encouraged by the new Chinese communist government, who were at the same time massing troops in Fukien province facing Taiwan, as if they were about to attack Chiang Kai-shek.
- Perhaps Stalin and the Russians were responsible, wanting to test Truman's determination; they had supplied the North Koreans with tanks and other equipment. A communist takeover of the south would strengthen Russia's position in the Pacific and be a splendid gesture against the Americans, to make up for Stalin's failure in West Berlin.
- The communists claimed that South Korea had started the war, when troops of the 'bandit traitor' Syngman Rhee had crossed the 38th parallel.

Probably the most widely accepted view nowadays is that Kim Il Sung himself pressed the idea of a campaign to unify the peninsula, and that both the USSR and China approved the plan and promised help in the way of war materials, but made it clear that they had no desire themselves to become directly involved.

(c) The USA takes action

There were several reasons for President Truman's decision to intervene:

- He was convinced that the attack was Stalin's doing; he took it as a deliberate challenge and saw it as part of a vast Russian plan to spread communism as widely as possible.
- Some Americans saw the invasion as similar to Hitler's policies during the 1930s. Appeasement of the aggressors had failed then, and therefore it was essential not to make the same mistake again.
- Truman thought it was important to support the United Nations Organization, which had replaced the League of Nations. The League had failed to preserve peace because the great powers – and especially the USA – had not been prepared to back it. Truman was determined that the USA should not repeat that fatal mistake.
- Truman was a Democrat president, and he and his party were coming under severe criticism from the Republicans for their failure to take action against what they saw as the dangerous spread of world communism. A Republican senator, Joseph McCarthy, claimed that the State Department was 'infested' with communists who were, in effect, working for the USSR. Truman was anxious to show that this claim was preposterous.

American policy therefore changed decisively: instead of just economic help and promises of support, Truman decided it was essential for the West to take a stand by supporting South Korea. American troops in Japan were ordered to Korea even before the UN had decided what action to take. The UN Security Council called on North Korea to withdraw her troops, and when this was ignored, asked member states to send help to South Korea. This decision was reached in the absence of the Russian delegation, who were boycotting meetings in protest against the UN refusal to allow Mao's new Chinese regime to be represented, and who would certainly have vetoed such a decision. In the event, the USA and 14 other countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Nationalist China, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia, Greece, Turkey, Panama, the Philippines, Thailand and Britain) sent troops, though the vast majority were Americans. All forces were under the command of American General MacArthur.

Their arrival was just in time to prevent the whole of South Korea from being overrun by the communists. By September, communist forces had captured the whole country except the south-east, around the port of Pusan. UN reinforcements poured into Pusan and on 15 September, American marines landed at Inchon, near Seoul, 200 miles behind the communist front lines. Then followed an incredibly swift collapse of the North Korean forces: by the end of September UN troops had entered Seoul and cleared the south of communists. Instead of calling for a ceasefire, now that the original UN objective had been achieved, Truman ordered an invasion of North Korea, with UN approval, aiming to unite the country and hold free elections. The Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai) warned that China would resist if UN troops entered North Korea, but the warning was ignored. By the end of October, UN troops had captured Pyongyang, occupied two-thirds of North Korea and reached the River Yalu, the frontier between North Korea and China.

The Chinese government was seriously alarmed: the Americans had already placed a fleet between Taiwan and the mainland to prevent an attack on Chiang, and there seemed every chance that they would now invade Manchuria (the part of China bordering on North Korea). In November therefore, the Chinese launched a massive counter-offensive with over 300 000 troops, described as 'volunteers'; by mid-January 1951 they had driven the UN troops out of North Korea, crossed the 38th parallel and captured Seoul again. MacArthur was shocked at the strength of the Chinese forces and argued that the best way to defeat communism was to attack Manchuria, with atomic bombs if necessary. However, Truman thought this would provoke a large-scale war, which the USA did not want, so *he decided to settle for merely containing communism*; MacArthur was removed from his command. In June UN troops cleared the communists out of South Korea again and fortified the frontier. Peace talks opened in Panmunjom and lasted for two years, ending in July 1953 with an agreement that the frontier should be roughly along the 38th parallel, where it had been before the war began.

(d) The results of the war were wide-ranging

- For Korea itself it was a disaster: the country was devastated, about four million Korean soldiers and civilians had been killed and five million people were homeless. The division seemed permanent; both states remained intensely suspicious of each other and heavily armed, and there were constant ceasefire violations.
- Truman could take some satisfaction from having contained communism and could claim that this success, plus American rearmament, dissuaded world communism from further aggression. However, many Republicans felt that the USA had lost an opportunity to destroy communism in China, and this feeling contributed towards some of the later excesses of McCarthyism.
- The UN had exerted its authority and reversed an act of aggression, but the communist world denounced it as a tool of the capitalists.
- The military performance of communist China was impressive; she had prevented the unification of Korea under American influence and was now clearly a world power. The fact that she was still not allowed a seat in the UN seemed even more unreasonable.
- The conflict brought a new dimension to the Cold War. American relations were now permanently strained with China as well as with Russia; the familiar pattern of both sides trying to build up alliances appeared in Asia as well as Europe. China supported the Indo-Chinese communists in their struggle for independence from France, and at the same time offered friendship and aid to under-developed Third World countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America; 'peaceful coexistence' agreements were signed with India and Burma (1954).

Meanwhile the Americans tried to encircle China with bases: in 1951 defensive agreements were signed with Australia and New Zealand, and in 1954 these three states, together with Britain and France, set up *the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)*. However, the USA was disappointed when only three Asian states – Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines – joined SEATO. It was obvious that many states wanted to keep clear of the Cold War and remain uncommitted.

Relations between the USA and China were also poor because of the Taiwan situation. The communists still hoped to capture the island and destroy Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party for good; but the Americans were committed to defending Chiang and wanted to keep Taiwan as a military base.

7.2 CUBA

(a) Why did Castro come to power?

The situation which resulted in Fidel Castro coming to power in January 1959 had built up over a number of years.

- *There was long-standing resentment among many Cubans at the amount of American influence in the country*. This dated back to 1898 when the USA had helped rescue Cuba from Spanish control. Although the island remained an independent republic, American troops were needed from time to time to maintain stability, and American financial aid and investment kept the Cuban economy ticking over. In fact there was some truth in the claim that *the USA controlled the Cuban economy*: American companies held controlling interests in all Cuban industries (sugar, tobacco, textiles, iron, nickel, copper, manganese, paper and rum), owned half the land, about three-fifths of the railways, all electricity production and the entire telephone system. The USA was the main market for Cuba's exports, of which sugar was by far the most important. All this explains why the American ambassador in Havana (the Cuban capital) was usually referred to as the second most important man in Cuba. The American connection need not have been resented so much if it had resulted in an efficiently run country, but this was not so.
- Though Cuba was prosperous compared with other Latin American countries, *she was too dependent on the export of sugar*, *and the wealth of the country was concentrated in the hands of a few*. Unemployment was a serious problem; it varied from about 8 per cent of the labour force during the five months of the sugar harvest to over 30 per cent during the rest of the year. Yet there was no unemployment benefit, and the trade unions, dominated by workers who had all-the-year-round jobs in sugar mills, did nothing to help. The poverty of the unemployed was in stark contrast to the wealth in Havana and in the hands of corrupt government officials; consequently *social tensions were high*.
- *No effective political system had been developed*. In 1952, Fulgencio Batista, who had been a leading politician since 1933, seized power in a military coup and began to rule as a dictator. He introduced no reforms, and according to historian Hugh Thomas, 'spent a lot of time dealing with his private affairs and his foreign fortunes, leaving himself too little time for affairs of state'. As well as being corrupt, his regime was also brutal.
- Since *there was no prospect of a peaceful social revolution*, the feeling grew that violent revolution was necessary. The leading exponent of this view was Fidel Castro, a young lawyer from a middle-class background, who specialized in defending the poor. Before he came to power, Castro was more of a liberal nationalist than a communist: he wanted to rid Cuba of Batista and corruption, and to introduce limited land reforms so that all peasants would receive some land. After an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Batista in 1953, which earned him two years in jail, Castro began a campaign of guerrilla warfare and sabotage in the cities. The rebels soon controlled the mountainous areas of the east and north and won popular support there by carrying through Castro's land reform policy.
- *Batista's reaction played into Castro's hands*. He took savage reprisals against the guerrillas, torturing and murdering suspects. Even many of the middle classes began to support Castro as the most likely way of getting rid of a brutal dictator. Morale in Batista's poorly paid army began to crumble in the summer of 1958, after an unsuccessful attempt to destroy Castro's forces. The USA began to feel embarrassment at Batista's behaviour and cut off arms supplies; this was a serious blow

to the dictator's prestige. In September a small rebel force under Che Guevara, an Argentinian supporter of Castro, gained control of the main road across the island and prepared to move on Santa Clara. On 1 January 1959 Batista fled from Cuba, and a liberal government was set up with Castro at its head.

(b) How were Cuba's foreign relations affected?

Cuban relations with the USA did not deteriorate immediately; Castro was thought to be, at worst, a social democrat, and so most Americans were prepared to give him a chance. Before long, however, he outraged the USA by *nationalizing American-owned estates and factories*. President Eisenhower threatened to stop importing Cuban sugar, forcing Castro to sign a trade agreement with Russia. In July 1960 when the Americans carried out their threat, the USSR promised to buy Cuba's sugar, and Castro confiscated all remaining American property. As Cuba's relations with the USA worsened, those with the USSR improved: in January 1961 the USA broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba, but the Russians were already supplying economic aid. For what happened next – the Bay of Pigs invasion and the missiles crisis – see Section 6.4(b). After the missiles crisis, relations between the USA and Cuba remained cool. The attitude of other Latin American states, most of which had right-wing governments, was one of extreme suspicion; in 1962 they expelled Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS), which only made her more dependent on the USSR.

(c) Castro and his problems

Cuba was heavily dependent on the USA – and later the USSR – buying most of her sugar exports; the economy relied far too much on the sugar industry and was at the mercy of fluctuations in world sugar prices. The whole government and administration were riddled with corruption, and in addition there was serious unemployment and poverty. The new government launched itself into tackling the problems with enthusiasm and dedication. Historian David Harkness writes that, during his first ten years, Castro took this poor and backward country by the scruff of the neck and shook it into new and radically different patterns of life. Agricultural land was taken over by the government and collective farms were introduced; factories and businesses were nationalized; attempts were made to modernize sugar production and increase output, and to introduce new industries and reduce Cuba's dependence on sugar. Social reform included attempts to improve education, housing, health, medical facilities and communications. There was equality for black people and more rights for women. There were touring cinemas, theatres, concerts and art exhibitions. Castro himself seemed to have boundless energy; he was constantly travelling around the island, making speeches and urging people to greater efforts.

By the end of the 1970s the government could claim considerable success, especially in the area of social reform. All children were now receiving some education (instead of fewer than half before 1959); sanitation, hygiene and health care were much improved, unemployment and corruption were reduced, and there was a greater sense of equality and stability than ever before. The government seemed to be popular with the vast majority of people. These successes were achieved against a background of continual harassment and attempts at destabilization by the USA. These included a trade embargo, bomb attacks on Cuban factories, oil refineries and sugar refineries. Under President Nixon (1969–74) the campaign intensified to such an extent that it amounted to US government-sponsored state terrorism. During the 1990s the economic embargo on Cuba became more stringent than ever. It was condemned by the European Union, but the Clinton administration rejected this 'interference'.

Undeterred by all this, Castro and his supporters, especially Che Guevara, did their best to spread their revolution, first into Che's native Argentina. In early 1964 this attempt was crushed by the Argentinian army. The Cubans turned their attention to Africa, helping rebels to seize power in Algeria and then becoming unsuccessfully involved in the civil war in the former Belgian Congo. In 1966 Che Guevara tried to organize a revolution in Bolivia but his expedition ended in disaster when he was captured and executed in October 1967. Turning their attention back to Africa, the Cubans backed the Marxist MPLA in Angola (1975) and the Marxist leader Mengistu in Ethiopia (1977). Castro was now seen as a hero by most Third World countries, though his popularity slumped when he declared his support for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

The US destabilization policy and the economic embargo meant that some of Castro's economic policies had little success: the attempt to diversify industrial and agricultural output was disappointing, and so the island's economy still depended unhealthily on the quality of the sugar harvest, the world price of sugar and the willingness of the USSR and her satellites to buy up Cuba's exports. In 1980 the sugar crop was reduced by a fungus infection, while the tobacco crop was seriously affected by another fungus. This plunged the island into an economic crisis, unemployment rose again and thousands of people began to emigrate to the USA. Food rationing was introduced and the whole economy was being heavily subsidized by the USSR. By 1991 when the USSR split up and ceased to be communist, Cuba had lost its most powerful supporter.

However, the Castro regime continued to survive. During the closing years of the twentieth century, the economy was boosted by a growth in tourism. Castro continued to enjoy good relations with Venezuela: in October 2000 the Venezuelan government agreed to provide Cuba with oil at favourable prices. Nevertheless, most Latin American states still viewed her as an outcast; Cuba was the only country in the Americas not invited to the third Summit of the Americas, held in Quebec in 2001. A new economic crisis developed in 2002, caused partly by drought and the consequent poor sugar harvest in 2001, and partly because the terrorist attacks of September 2001 in the USA adversely affected tourism. In February 2008 ill health forced Castro (aged 80) to hand over the presidency to his younger brother Raúl (aged 78). Since then there have been some modest improvements. In March 2008 the use of mobile phones was legalized – a measure designed to appeal to the young. Peasants are now allowed to cultivate unused land on collective farms and there have been improvements in the pricing of agricultural products that led to farmers bringing more food to market. Unfortunately hurricanes in the autumn of 2008 caused extensive damage and held up progress.

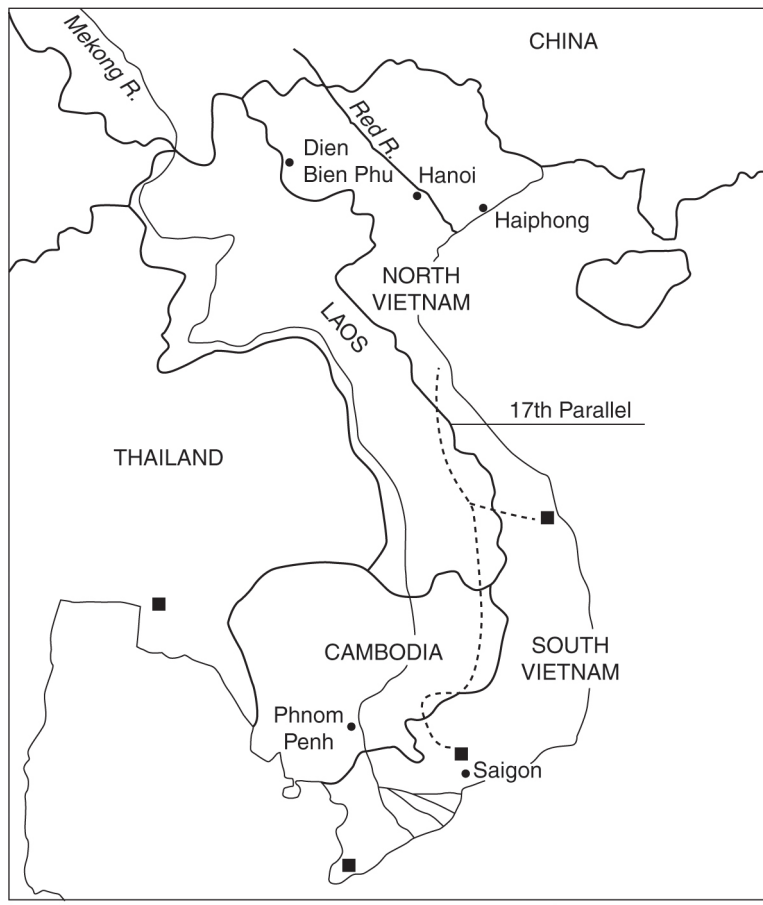
7.3 THE WARS IN VIETNAM, 1946–54 AND 1961–75

Indo-China, which consisted of three areas, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, was part of the French empire in south-east Asia, and was the scene of almost non-stop conflict from the end of the Second World War. In the first phase of the conflict, the peoples of these areas fought for and won their independence from the French. The second phase (1961–75) began with civil war in South Vietnam; the USA intervened to prevent the further spread of communism, but eventually had to admit failure.

(a) 1946–54

From 1946 until 1954 the Vietnamese were fighting for independence from France. Indo-China was occupied by the Japanese during the war. Resistance to both Japanese and

French was organized by *the League for Vietnamese Independence (Vietminh)*, led by the communist Ho Chi Minh, who had spent many years in Russia learning how to organize revolutions. The Vietminh, though led by communists, was an alliance of all shades of political opinion that wanted an end to foreign control. At the end of the war in 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared the whole of Vietnam independent. When it became clear that the French had no intention of allowing full independence, hostilities broke out, beginning an eight-year struggle which ended with the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu (May 1954). The Vietminh were successful partly because they were masters of guerrilla tactics and had massive support from the Vietnamese people, and because the French, still suffering from the after-effects of the world war, failed to send enough troops. The decisive factor was probably that from 1950 the new Chinese communist government of Mao Zedong supplied the rebels with arms and equipment. The USA also became involved: seeing the struggle as part of the Cold War and the fight against communism, the Americans supplied the French with military and economic aid; but it was not enough. However, the Americans were determined to take France's place in order to prevent the spread of communism throughout south-east Asia.



Map 7.2 **The wars in Vietnam**

By the Geneva Agreement (1954), Laos and Cambodia were to be independent; Vietnam was temporarily divided into two states at the 17th parallel (see Map 7.2). Ho Chi Minh's government was recognized in North Vietnam. South Vietnam was to have a separate government for the time being, but elections were to be held in July 1956 for the whole country, which would then become united. Ho Chi Minh was disappointed at the partition, but was confident that the communists would win the national elections. As it turned out, *the elections were never held*, and a repeat performance of the Korean situation seemed likely. A civil war gradually developed in South Vietnam which eventually involved the North and the USA.

(b) What caused the civil war in South Vietnam and why did the USA become involved?

- The South Vietnamese government under *President Ngo Dinh Diem* (chosen by a national referendum in 1955) refused to make preparations for the elections for the whole of Vietnam. The USA, which was backing his regime, did not press him for fear of a communist victory if the elections went ahead. US President Eisenhower (1953–61) was just as worried as Truman had been about the spread of communism. He seemed to become obsessed with *the 'domino theory'* – if there is a line of dominoes standing on end close to each other and one is pushed over, it will knock over the next one in the line, and so on. Eisenhower thought this could be applied to countries: if one country in a region 'fell' to communism, it would quickly 'knock over' all its neighbours. However, the US attitude was a violation of the Geneva Agreement.
- Although Ngo began energetically, his government soon lost popularity: he came from a wealthy Roman Catholic family, whereas three-quarters of the population were Buddhist peasants who thought themselves discriminated against. They demanded land reform of the type carried out in China and North Vietnam. Here land had been taken away from wealthy landowners and redistributed among the poorer people; but this did not happen in South Vietnam. Ngo also gained a reputation, perhaps not wholly deserved, for corruption, and he was unpopular with nationalists, who thought he was too much under American influence.
- In 1960 various opposition groups, which included many former communist members of the Vietminh, formed *the National Liberation Front (NLF)*. They demanded a democratic national coalition government which would introduce reforms and negotiate peacefully for a united Vietnam. A guerrilla campaign began, attacking government officials and buildings; Buddhist monks had their own special brand of protest – committing suicide in public by setting fire to themselves. Ngo's credibility declined further when he dismissed all criticism – however reasonable – and all opposition as communist-inspired. In fact the communists were only one section of the NLF. Ngo also introduced harsh security measures. He was overthrown and murdered in an army coup in November 1963, after which the country was ruled by a succession of generals, of whom President Nguyen Van Thieu lasted the longest (1967–75). The removal of Ngo left the basic situation unchanged and the guerrilla war continued.
- When it became clear that Ngo could not cope with the situation, the USA decided to increase their military presence in South Vietnam. Under Eisenhower they had been supporting the regime since 1954, with economic aid and military advisers, and they accepted Ngo's claim that communists were behind all the trouble. Having failed to defeat communism in North Korea and Cuba, they felt a strong stand must be made. Both Kennedy and his successor Lyndon Johnson were prepared to go further than

just economic aid and advisers. In public the Americans said their intervention was to protect the independence of the Vietnamese people, but the real reason was to keep the country securely in the non-communist bloc.

- The Americans were strengthened in their resolve by the knowledge that *the Vietcong* (as the guerrillas were now known) (see Illus. 8.1) were receiving supplies, equipment and troops from North Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh believed that such aid was justified: it was the USA and the South who were refusing to be bound by the Geneva agreements; given South Vietnam's refusal to agree to national elections, only force could unite the two halves of the country.
- The Americans' involvement in Vietnam was different from their role in Korea where they fought as part of a UN coalition. In the intervening period, many new members, mostly former colonies of European powers, had joined the UN. These new states were critical of what they considered to be unjustified US interference in what should have been an independent country. They could not be relied on to support US action via the UN, and therefore the US had to act on its own, without UN participation.

(c) The phases of the war

These correspond to successive American presidencies, each of which saw the introduction of new policies.

- *John F. Kennedy (1961–3)* tried to keep American involvement down to an anti-guerrilla campaign. He sent about 16 000 'advisers' plus helicopters and other equipment and introduced *the 'safe village' policy*, in which local peasants were moved en masse into fortified villages, leaving the Vietcong isolated outside. This was a failure because most of the Vietcong were peasants, who simply continued to operate inside the villages.
- *Lyndon Johnson (1963–9)* was faced with a situation, according to reports from American advisers in 1964, where the Vietcong and the NLF controlled about 40 per cent of South Vietnamese villages and the peasant population seemed to support them. He assumed that the Vietcong were controlled by Ho Chi Minh and he decided to bomb North Vietnam (1965) in the hope that Ho would call off the campaign. Many historians have blamed Johnson for committing the USA so deeply in Vietnam, calling it 'Johnson's War'. Recent assessments have taken a more sympathetic view of Johnson's predicament. According to Kevin Ruane, 'far from being the hawk of legend, historians now tend to see Johnson as a man wracked with uncertainty about which direction to take on Vietnam'. He was afraid that American intervention on a large scale would bring China into the war. His real interest was his campaign for social reform – his 'great society' programme. However, he inherited the situation from decisions taken by the two previous presidents – he was the unfortunate one who felt he had no alternative but to honour their commitments.

  Over the next seven years, *a greater tonnage of bombs was dropped on North Vietnamese cities than fell on Germany during the Second World War*. In addition, over half a million American troops arrived in the South. In spite of these massive efforts, the Vietcong still managed to unleash an offensive in February 1968 which captured something like 80 per cent of all towns and villages. Although much ground was lost later, this offensive convinced many Americans of the hopelessness of the struggle. Great pressure was put on the government by public opinion in the USA to withdraw from Vietnam. Some of his military experts told Johnson that the USA could not win the war at any reasonable cost. On 31 March 1968 Johnson

therefore announced that he would suspend the bombing of North Vietnam, freeze troop levels and seek a negotiated peace. In May, peace talks opened in Paris – but no quick compromise could be reached, and the talks went on for another five years.

- *Richard Nixon (1969–74)* realized that a new approach was needed, since public opinion would hardly allow him to send any more American troops. Early in 1969 there were half a million Americans, 50 000 South Koreans and 750 000 South Vietnamese against 450 000 Vietcong plus perhaps 70 000 North Vietnamese. *Nixon's new idea was known as 'Vietnamization'*: the Americans would rearm and train the South Vietnamese army to look after the defence of South Vietnam; this would allow a gradual withdrawal of American troops (in fact about half had been sent home by mid-1971). On the other hand, Nixon began the heavy bombing of North Vietnam again, and also began to bomb *the Ho Chi Minh Trail* through Laos and Cambodia, along which supplies and troops came from North Vietnam.

  It was all to no avail: at the end of 1972 the Vietcong controlled the entire western half of the country. By now Nixon was under pressure both at home and from world opinion to withdraw. Several factors caused a revulsion of feeling against the war:

  - the terrible bombing of North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia;
  - the use of chemicals to destroy jungle foliage and of inflammable napalm jelly, which burned people alive; the after-effects of the chemicals caused many babies to be born deformed and handicapped;
  - the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians. The most notorious incident took place in March 1968, when American soldiers rounded up the inhabitants of the hamlet of My Lai, including old people carrying young children; they were all shot, and buried in mass graves; between 450 and 500 people were killed.

Nixon eventually acknowledged that there was no monolithic communist plan to dominate the world. In fact relations between China and the USSR were extremely strained and there were numerous border clashes between the two in Mongolia. Nixon seized his chance to improve relations with China: trade and travel restrictions were removed, and so were the US navy patrols in the Taiwan Straits. On the Chinese side, some of Mao's generals had told him that it was time to unfreeze relations with the USA. In February 1972, Nixon paid a successful visit to Beijing.

Eventually *a ceasefire was arranged for January 1973*. It was agreed that all American troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam, and both North and South would respect the frontier along the 17th parallel. However, the Vietcong continued their campaign and without the Americans, President Thieu's government in Saigon soon collapsed as his badly led armies crumbled. In April 1975 Saigon was occupied by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. *Vietnam was at last united and free from foreign intervention – under a communist government*. In the same year communist governments were also established in Laos and Cambodia. *The American policy of preventing the spread of communism in south-east Asia had ended in complete failure*.

(d) Why did the USA fail?

- The main reason was that the Vietcong and the NLF had widespread support among ordinary people, who had genuine grievances against an inefficient government which failed to introduce necessary reforms. When the NLF was formed in 1960, the communists were only one of several opposition groups; by ignoring the rightness of the NLF case and choosing to prop up such an obviously deficient regime in their

obsession with the fight against communism, the Americans actually encouraged the spread of communism in the South.
- The Vietcong, like the Vietminh before them, were experts at guerrilla warfare and were fighting on familiar territory. The Americans found them much more difficult to deal with than the conventional armies they faced in Korea. With no distinguishing uniform, guerrillas could easily merge into the local peasant population. It proved impossible to stop supplies and reinforcements moving down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
- The Vietcong received important help from North Vietnam in the way of troops, and from China and Russia, who supplied arms. After 1970 the Russian contribution was vitally important and included rifles, machine-guns, long-range artillery, anti-aircraft missiles and tanks.
- The North Vietnamese were dedicated to eventual victory and the unification of their country. They showed amazing resilience: in spite of appalling casualties and damage during the American bombings, they responded by evacuating city populations and rebuilding factories outside the cities.

(e) The effects of the war were wide-reaching

Vietnam was united but the cost was appalling. Between 1 and 2 million Vietnamese civilians had lost their lives and around 18 million were left homeless. The North Vietnamese army probably lost as many as 900 000 men, while the South lost 185 000. About 48 000 American servicemen lost their lives, with a further 300 000 wounded. Around a third of the South was severely damaged by explosives and defoliants. The problems of reconstruction were enormous, and the new government's policies had unpleasant aspects such as concentration camps for opponents and no freedom of speech.

As well as being a blow to American prestige, this failure had a profound effect on American society; involvement in the war was seen in many circles as a terrible mistake, and this, together with the Watergate scandal, which forced Nixon to resign, shook confidence in a political system that could allow such things to happen. War veterans, instead of being treated as heroes, often found themselves shunned. Future American governments would have to think very carefully before committing the country so deeply in any similar situation. The war was a victory for the communist world, though both the Russians and Chinese reacted with restraint and did not boast about it to any great extent. This perhaps indicated that they wished to relax international tensions, though they now had another powerful force on their side in the Vietnamese army.

7.4 CHILE UNDER SALVADOR ALLENDE, 1970–3

In September 1970 Salvador Allende, a Marxist doctor of medicine from a middle-class background, won the presidential election as leader of a left-wing coalition of communists, socialists, radicals and social democrats; it called itself Unidad Popular (UP). It was a narrow victory, with Allende winning 36 per cent of the votes against the 35 per cent of his nearest rival. But it was enough to make him president, the world's first Marxist leader to be voted into power through a democratic election. Although it lasted only three years, Allende's government is worth looking at in some detail because it is still the only one of its kind and it shows the sort of problems likely to be faced by a Marxist government trying to function within a democratic system.

(a) How did Allende come to be elected?

Chile, unlike most other South American states, had a tradition of democracy. There were three main parties or groups of parties:

- the Unidad Popular, on the left;
- the Christian Democrats (also left-inclined);
- the National Party (a liberal/conservative coalition).

The army played little part in politics, and the democratic constitution (similar to that of the USA, except that the president could not stand for re-election immediately) was usually respected. The election of 1964 was won by Eduardo Frei, leader of the Christian Democrats, who believed in social reform. Frei began vigorously: inflation was brought down from 38 per cent to 25 per cent, the rich were made to pay their taxes instead of evading them, 360 000 new houses were built, the number of schools was more than doubled, and some limited land reform was introduced: over 1200 private holdings which were being run inefficiently were confiscated and given out to landless peasants. He also took over about half the holdings in the American-owned copper mines, with suitable compensation. The American government admired his reforms and poured in lavish economic aid.

By 1967, however, the tide was beginning to turn against Frei: the left thought his land reforms too cautious and wanted full nationalization of the copper industry (Chile's most important export), whereas the right thought he had already gone too far. In 1969 there was a serious drought in which a third of the harvest was lost; large quantities of food had to be imported, causing inflation to soar again. There were strikes of copper miners demanding higher wages and several miners were killed by government troops. Allende made skilful use of this ammunition during the 1970 election campaign, pointing out that Frei's achievements fell far short of his promises. Allende's coalition had a much better campaign organization than the other parties and could get thousands of supporters out on the streets. Allende himself inspired confidence: elegant and cultured, he appeared the very opposite of the violent revolutionary. Appearances were not deceptive: he believed that communism could succeed without a violent revolution. In the 1970 election, 36 per cent of the voters were in favour of trying his policies.

(b) Allende's problems and policies

The problems facing the new government were enormous: inflation was running at over 30 per cent, unemployment at 20 per cent, industry was stagnating and 90 per cent of the population lived in such poverty that half the children under 15 suffered from malnutrition. Allende believed in a redistribution of income, which would enable the poor to buy more and thereby stimulate the economy. All-round wage increases of about 40 per cent were introduced and firms were not allowed to increase prices. The remainder of the copper industry, textiles and banks were nationalized, and Frei's land redistribution speeded up. The army was awarded an even bigger pay rise than anybody else to make sure of keeping its support. In foreign affairs, Allende restored diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba, China and East Germany.

Whether Allende's policies would have succeeded in the long run is open to argument. Certainly he retained his popularity sufficiently for the UP to win 49 per cent of the votes in the 1972 local elections and to slightly increase their seats in the 1973 elections for Congress. However, the Allende experiment came to an abrupt and violent end in September 1973.

(c) Why was he overthrown?

Criticism of the government gradually built up as Allende's policies began to cause problems.

- *Land redistribution caused a fall in agricultural production*, mainly because farmers whose land was due to be taken stopped sowing and often slaughtered their cattle (like the Russian *kulaks* during collectivization). This caused food shortages and further inflation.
- Private investors were frightened off and *the government became short of funds to carry out social reforms* (housing, education and social services) as rapidly as it would have liked.
- *Copper nationalization was disappointing*: there were long strikes for higher wages, production went down and the world price of copper fell suddenly by about 30 per cent, causing a further decrease in government revenue.
- Some communists who wanted a more drastic Castro-style approach to Chile's problems grew impatient with Allende's caution. They refused to make allowances for the fact that he did not have a stable majority in parliament; they formed the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), which embarrassed the non-violent UP by seizing farms and evicting the owners.
- The USA disapproved strongly of Allende's policies and did everything in their power to undermine Chile's economy. Other South American governments were nervous in case the Chileans tried to export their 'revolution'.

Looming above everything else was the question of *what would happen in September 1976 when the next presidential election was due*. Under the constitution, Allende would not be able to stand, but no Marxist regime had ever let itself be voted out of power. The opposition feared, perhaps with justification, that Allende was planning to change the constitution. As things stood, any president finding his legislation blocked by Congress could appeal to the nation by means of a referendum. With sufficient support Allende might be able to use the referendum device to postpone the election. It was this fear, or so they afterwards claimed, which caused the opposition groups to draw together and take action before Allende did. They organized a massive strike, and having won the support of the army, the right staged a military coup. It was organized by leading generals, who set up a military dictatorship in which *General Pinochet* came to the fore. Left-wing leaders were murdered or imprisoned and Allende himself was reported to have committed suicide. However, the cause of death has been controversial, many of his supporters claiming that he was gunned down in the presidential palace. In 2011 Chilean TV reported that a newly discovered document proved beyond doubt that he had been assassinated. The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), helped by the Brazilian government (a repressive military regime), played a vital role in the preparations for the coup, as part of its policy of preventing the spread of communism in Latin America. There is evidence that the CIA had been considering a coup as soon as Allende won the election in 1970. There is no doubt that the Nixon administration had done its best to destabilize the Allende government over the next three years by undermining the economy. Nixon himself was reported as saying that they must 'make the Chilean economy scream'.

The new Chilean regime soon provoked criticism from the outside world for its brutal treatment of political prisoners and its violations of human rights. However, the American government, which had reduced its economic aid while Allende was in power, stepped up its assistance again. The Pinochet regime had some economic success and by 1980 had brought the annual inflation rate down from around 1000 per cent to manageable

proportions. Pinochet was in no hurry to return the country to civilian rule. He eventually allowed presidential elections in 1989, when the civilian candidate he supported was heavily defeated, winning less than 30 per cent of the votes. Pinochet permitted the winner, Christian Democrat leader Patricio Aylwin, to become president (1990), but the constitution (introduced in 1981) allowed Pinochet himself to remain Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces for a further eight years. During his 17 years as president, around 3000 people were killed or 'disappeared', while tens of thousands were tortured, imprisoned or driven into exile.

Pinochet duly stepped down in 1998, but his retirement did not work out as he had planned. On a visit to London later that year, he was arrested and held in Britain for 16 months after the Spanish government requested his extradition to face charges of torturing Spanish citizens in Chile. He was eventually allowed to return to Chile on medical grounds in March 2000. However, one of his most bitter opponents, Ricardo Lagos, had just been elected president (January 2000) – the first socialist president since Allende. Pinochet soon found himself facing over 250 charges of human rights abuses, but in July 2001 the Chilean Court of Appeal decided that the general, now aged 86, was too ill to stand trial. He died in 2006 at the age of 91. (For further developments in Chile.)

7.5 MORE UNITED STATES INTERVENTIONS

Vietnam, Cuba and Chile were not the only countries in which the USA intervened during the first half of the Cold War. Working through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the American State Department was active in an astonishing number of states in the cause of preserving freedom and human rights, and above all, preventing the spread of communism. Often the regimes that were labelled as communist and targeted for removal were simply pursuing policies which went against American interests. US activities were carried out sometimes in secret, leaving the American people largely unaware of what was going on, or, as in the case of major military interventions, were presented as necessary surgical actions against the cancer of communism. Techniques included attempts to carry out assassinations, rigging of elections, organizing and financing acts of terrorism, economic destabilization and, in the last resort, full-scale military intervention.

Recently several former members of the State Department and the CIA, for example William Blum and Richard Agee, and a number of other writers, including the internationally renowned linguistics expert Noam Chomsky, have produced detailed accounts of how the leaders of the USA tried to build up their influence and power in the world by exercising control over such countries as Iran, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Indonesia, Guyana, Iraq, Cambodia, Laos, Ecuador, the Congo/Zaire, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Uruguay, Bolivia, East Timor, Nicaragua and many more. There is insufficient space to examine all these cases, but a few examples will illustrate how US influence reached out into most parts of the world.

(a) South-east Asia

The area known as Indo-China consists of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. All three states gained their independence from France by the Geneva agreements of 1954 (see section 7.3 for what happened in Vietnam.)

In *Laos* after independence, there was conflict between the right-wing government backed by the USA, and various left-wing groups led by the Pathet Lao, a left-wing nationalist party which had fought in the struggle against the French. At first the Pathet

Lao showed itself willing to take part in coalition governments in an attempt to bring about peaceful social change. The USA saw the Pathet Lao as dangerous communists: the CIA and the State Department between them arranged a series of interventions which by 1960 had removed all left-wingers from important positions. The left turned to armed force and the CIA responded by gathering an army of 30 000 anti-communists from all over Asia to crush the insurgents. Between 1965 and 1973 the US air force carried out regular bombing raids over Laos, causing enormous casualties and devastation. It was all to no avail: American intervention strengthened the resolve of the left; following the American withdrawal from Vietnam and south-east Asia, and the communist takeover in Cambodia, the Laotian right gave up the struggle and their leaders left the country. In December 1975 the Pathet Lao took control peacefully and the Lao People's Democratic Republic was proclaimed.

In *Cambodia* there was American involvement in a coup that overthrew the regime of Prince Sihanouk in 1970; the bombing campaigns which preceded the coup left the Cambodian economy in ruins. American intervention was followed by five years of civil war, which ended when Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge took power. During the Vietnam War of 1965–73, the USA used *Thailand* as a base from which the bombing of North Vietnam took place. Eventually the American presence in Thailand was so massive that they seemed to have taken the country over. There was considerable opposition from Thais who resented the way in which their country was being used, but all criticism was treated as communist-inspired; over 40 000 American troops were active in trying to suppress opposition guerrilla fighters and in training Thai government forces. In August 1966 the *Washington Post* reported that in US government circles there was a strong feeling that 'continued dictatorship in Thailand suits the United States, since it assures the continuation of American bases in the country, and that, as a US official put it bluntly, "is our real interest in this place"'.

(b) Africa

The USA took a great interest in Africa, where the late 1950s and 1960s was the era of decolonization and the emergence of many newly independent states. At the end of the Second World War the Americans had put pressure on the European states that still owned colonies, to grant them independence as soon as possible. They claimed that in view of the growing nationalist movements in Africa and Asia, attempts to hang on to colonies would encourage the development of communism. Another reason for the US attitude was that Americans viewed the newly emerging nations as potential markets in which they could trade and establish both economic and political influence. In the Cold War atmosphere, the worst crime any new government could commit, in American eyes, was to show the slightest hint of left-wing or socialist policies and any sympathy with the USSR.

In June 1960 *the Congo* (formerly the Belgian Congo) became an independent state with Patrice Lumumba as prime minister. The country depended heavily on its exports of copper, but the copper-mining industry, situated mainly in the eastern province of Katanga, was still controlled by a Belgian company. Some leading Americans also had financial interests in the company. Lumumba talked about 'economic independence' for the Congo, which the Belgians and Americans took to mean 'nationalization'. The Belgians and the CIA encouraged Katanga to declare itself independent from the Congo so that they could keep control of the copper industry. Lumumba appealed for help first of all to the UN and then to the USSR. This was a fatal mistake: the CIA and the Belgians encouraged Lumumba's opponents, so that he was dismissed and

later assassinated (January 1961); the CIA was deeply involved. After 1965 the USA supported the corrupt and brutal regime of General Mobutu, several times sending troops to suppress rebels. It seemed that no internal excess was too much, provided Mobutu acted as a friend of the USA. He remained in power until May 1997.

Ghana became independent in 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. He was socialist in outlook and wanted to steer a middle way between the western powers and the communist bloc. This meant forming good relations with both sides. When he began to forge links with the USSR, China and East Germany, alarm bells rang in Washington. The CIA was active in Ghana and was in contact with a group of army officers who opposed Nkrumah's increasingly undemocratic style. In 1966, while Nkrumah was away on a visit to China, the army, backed by the CIA, launched a coup and he was forced into exile.

(c) The Middle East

The Middle East was an important area, serving as a sort of crossroads between the western nations, the communist bloc and the Third World countries of Asia and Africa. Its other importance is that it produces a large proportion of the world's oil. The USA and the states of western Europe were anxious to maintain some influence there, both to block the spread of communism and to keep some control over the region's oil supplies. The Eisenhower administration (1953–61) issued a statement which became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine, declaring that the US was prepared to use armed force to assist any Middle Eastern country against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism. At different times since 1945 the USA has intervened in most of the Middle East states, destabilizing or overthrowing governments which it chose to define as 'communist'.

In 1950 the Shah (ruler) of *Iran* signed a defence treaty with the USA directed against the neighbouring USSR, which had been trying to set up a communist government in northern Iran. In 1953 the prime minister, Dr Mussadiq, nationalized a British-owned oil company. The USA and the British organized a coup, which removed Mussadiq and restored the Shah to full control. He remained in power for the next 25 years, fully backed and supported by Washington, until he was forced out in January 1979.

Iraq came in for constant attention from the USA. In 1958 General Abdul Kassem overthrew the Iraqi monarchy and proclaimed a republic. He was in favour of reform and modernization, and although he himself was not a communist, the new atmosphere of freedom and openness encouraged the growth of the Iraqi Communist Party. This made Washington uneasy; the State Department was further perturbed in 1960 when Kassem was involved in setting up the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which aimed to break the control of western oil companies over the sale of Middle East oil. The CIA had been trying to destabilize the country for several years – by encouraging a Turkish invasion, financing Kurdish guerrillas who were agitating for more autonomy and attempting to assassinate Kassem. In 1963 they were successful – Kassem was overthrown and killed in a coup backed by the CIA and Britain.

From 1979 the USA financed and supplied Saddam Hussein, who became Iraqi leader in 1968, backing him against the new anti-American government in Iran. After the long and inconclusive Iran–Iraq War (1980–8), Saddam's forces invaded and conquered Kuwait (August 1990), only to be driven out again by UN forces, of which by far the largest contingent was the American one. In 2003 the Americans, with British help, finally overthrew and captured Saddam for further developments.

7.6 DÉTENTE: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FROM THE 1970S TO THE 1990S

The word 'détente' is used to mean a permanent relaxation of tensions between East and West. The first real signs of détente could be seen in the early 1970s. With one or two blips along the way, détente eventually led on to the end of the Cold War.

(a) Reasons for détente

As the nuclear arsenals built up, both sides became increasingly fearful of a catastrophic nuclear war in which there could be no real winner. Both sides were sickened by the horrors of Vietnam. In addition, countries had their own individual motives for wanting détente.

- *The USSR was finding the expense of keeping up with the Americans crippling*. It was essential to reduce defence spending so that they could devote more resources to bringing living standards up to western levels, both in the USSR and in the satellite states, all of which were suffering economic difficulties. In 1968 Russian troops were sent to Prague to deal with disturbing developments in Czechoslovakia, when Alexander Dubček tried to introduce 'communism with a human face'. There was unrest, especially in Poland in the early 1970s, which threatened to destabilize the communist bloc. At the same time the Russians were on bad terms with China, and did not want to be left out when relations between China and the USA began to improve in 1971.
- *The Americans were beginning to realize that there must be a better way of coping with communism than the one which was having so little success in Vietnam*. Clearly there were limits to what their military power could achieve. Some Congressmen and Senators were even beginning to talk of a return to 'isolationism'.
- *The Chinese were anxious about their isolation*, nervous about American intentions in Vietnam (after what had happened in Korea) and not happy about their worsening relations with the USSR.
- *The nations of western Europe were worried because they would be in the front line if nuclear war broke out*. Willi Brandt, who became Chancellor of West Germany in 1969, worked for better relations with eastern Europe, a policy known as *Ostpolitik*.

(b) The USSR and the USA

They had already made progress with the 'hotline' telephone link and the agreement to carry out only underground nuclear tests (both in 1963). An agreement signed in 1967 banned the use of nuclear weapons in outer space. The first major breakthrough came in 1972 when the two countries signed *the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty*, *known as SALT I*, which decided how many ABMs, ICBMs and SLBMs each side could have; there was no agreement about MIRVs. The agreement did not reduce the amount of armaments but *it did slow down the arms race*. Presidents Brezhnev and Nixon had three summit meetings, negotiations opened for a further treaty to be known as SALT II and the USA began to export wheat to Russia.

Another important step was *the Helsinki Agreement (July 1975)*, in which the USA, Canada, the USSR and most European states accepted the European frontiers which had been drawn up after the Second World War (thus recognizing the division of Germany).

The communist countries promised to allow their peoples 'human rights', including freedom of speech and freedom to leave the country.

However, *détente did not proceed without some setbacks*. This was especially true in 1979 when NATO became nervous at the deployment of 150 new Russian SS-20 missiles. NATO decided to deploy over 500 Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe by 1983 as a deterrent to a possible Russian attack on western Europe. At the same time the US Senate decided not to accept a SALT II treaty which would have limited numbers of MIRVs. When the Russians invaded Afghanistan on Christmas Day 1979 and replaced the president with one more favourable to them, all the old western suspicions of Russian motives revived.

The next few years are sometimes referred to as 'the second Cold War'. *Both sides spent the first half of the 1980s building up their nuclear arsenals*, and US President Reagan (1981–9) apparently gave the go-ahead for a new weapons system, *the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI)*, *also known as 'Star Wars'*. This was intended to use weapons based in space to destroy ballistic missiles in flight.

Détente gathered momentum again thanks to the determination of the new Soviet leader, *Mikhail Gorbachev (1985–91)*. In November 1985 he had a meeting with Reagan in Geneva; this went well and they issued a joint statement that 'nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'. The signs were that détente was back on course. Then in April 1986 there was a disastrous accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in the Ukraine. This caused a great wave of anti-nuclear feeling in the USSR and Gorbachev decided that measures to reduce nuclear dangers were absolutely vital. In October 1986 he invited Reagan to a summit meeting at Reykjavik and proposed a 15-year timetable for a 'step-by-step process for ridding the earth of nuclear weapons'. The Americans responded to some extent, though Reagan was not prepared to abandon his Star Wars project. At the next summit, held in Washington (December 1987), a historic breakthrough was made: *Reagan and Gorbachev formally signed the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) Treaty.*

- All land-based intermediate-range (300 to 3000 miles) nuclear weapons were to be scrapped over the next three years. This meant 436 American and 1575 Soviet warheads, and would include all Russian missiles in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and all American Cruise and Pershing missiles based in western Europe.
- There were strict verification provisions so that both sides could check that the weapons were actually being destroyed.

However, all this amounted, at most, to only 4 per cent of existing stocks of nuclear weapons, and there was the stumbling block of Reagan's Star Wars, which he was still not prepared to give up, even though it was only at the planning stage. Nor did the agreement include British and French weapons. The UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher was determined that Britain should keep its own nuclear arsenal, and planned to develop Trident missiles, which were more sophisticated than Cruise missiles. Nevertheless, *this INF Treaty was an important turning point in the nuclear arms race*, *since it was the first time any weapons had been destroyed*.

By 1985 the USSR was seriously embarrassed by its involvement in Afghanistan. Although there were over 100 000 Soviet troops in the country, they found it impossible to subdue the ferocious Islamic guerrillas; it was a drain on their resources and a blow to their prestige. The hostility of China, the suspicion of Islamic states all over the world and repeated condemnations by the UN convinced Gorbachev it was time to pull out. It was eventually agreed that the Russians would begin withdrawing their troops from Afghanistan on 1 May 1988, provided the Americans stopped sending military aid to the Afghan resistance movement. In June 1988 Reagan went to Moscow to discuss the timetable for implementing the INF Treaty.

(c) China and the USA

China and the USA had been extremely hostile towards each other since the Korean War and seemed likely to remain so while the Americans backed Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists in Taiwan, and while the Chinese backed Ho Chi Minh. However, in 1971 the Chinese unexpectedly invited an American table-tennis team to visit China. Following the success of that visit, the USA responded by calling off their veto of Chinese entry into the UN. *Communist China was therefore allowed to become a member of the UN in October 1971*. President Nixon, looking for a bold initiative for which his presidency would be remembered, decided he would visit China himself. Chairman Mao agreed to receive him and the visit took place in February 1972. Though Mao was reported to have told Zhou Enlai that the USA was 'like an ape moving towards becoming a human being', the meeting led to a resumption of diplomatic relations. President Ford also paid a successful visit to Beijing (Peking) in 1975. There was still the problem of Taiwan to sour the relationship: though Chiang himself died in 1975, his supporters still occupied the island, and the communists would not be happy until it was brought under their control. Relations improved further in 1978 when Democrat President Carter decided to withdraw recognition of Nationalist China. However, this caused a row in the USA, where Carter was accused of betraying his ally.

The climax of détente between China and the USA came early in 1979 when *Carter gave formal recognition of the People's Republic of China*, and ambassadors were exchanged. Good relations were maintained during the 1980s. The Chinese were anxious that détente with the USA should continue, because of their conflict with Vietnam (Russia's ally), which had begun in 1979. In 1985 an agreement was signed on nuclear co-operation. Things suddenly took a turn for the worse in June 1989 when the Chinese government used troops to disperse a student demonstration in Tiananmen Square, Beijing (Peking). The government was afraid that the demonstration might turn into a revolution which could overthrow Chinese communism. At least a thousand students were killed and many later executed, and this brought worldwide condemnation. Tensions rose again in 1996 when the Chinese held 'naval exercises' in the straits between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, in protest at the Taiwanese democratic elections just about to be held.

(d) Relations between the USSR and China

Relations between the USSR and China deteriorated steadily after 1956. They had earlier signed a treaty of mutual assistance and friendship (1950), but later the Chinese did not approve of Khrushchev's policies, particularly his belief in 'peaceful coexistence', and his claim that it was possible to achieve communism by methods other than violent revolution. This went against the ideas of Lenin, leader of the 1917 Russian communist revolution, and so the Chinese accused the Russians of *'revisionism' – revising or reinterpreting the teachings of Marx and Lenin to suit their own needs*. They were angry at Khrushchev's 'soft' line towards the USA. In retaliation, the Russians reduced their economic aid to China.

The ideological argument was not the only source of trouble: there was also a frontier dispute. During the nineteenth century Russia had taken over large areas of Chinese territory north of Vladivostok and in Sinkiang province, which the Chinese were now demanding back, so far without success. Now that China herself was following a 'softer' policy towards the USA, it seemed that the territorial problem was the main bone of contention. At the end of the 1970s both Russia and China were vying for American support, against each other, for the leadership of world communism. To complicate matters further, Vietnam now supported Russia. When the Chinese attacked Vietnam (February 1979),

relations reached rock bottom. The Chinese attack was partly in retaliation for Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea (formerly Cambodia) in December 1978, which overthrew the Khmer Rouge government of Pol Pot, a protégé of China, and partly because of a frontier dispute. They withdrew after three weeks, having, as Beijing put it, 'taught the Vietnamese a lesson'. *In 1984 the Chinese set out their grievances against the USSR*:

- the presence of Russian troops in Afghanistan;
- Soviet backing of the Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea;
- the Soviet troop build-up along the Chinese frontiers of Mongolia and Manchuria.

Mikhail Gorbachev was determined to begin a new era in Sino-Russian relations. Five-year agreements on trade and economic co-operation were signed (July 1985) and regular contact took place between the two governments. A formal reconciliation took place in May 1989 when Gorbachev visited Beijing. Also in 1989 Vietnam withdrew its troops from Kampuchea, and so their relations with China improved.

7.7 THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS TRANSFORMED

(a) August 1988 to December 1991

Remarkable events happened in eastern Europe in the period August 1988 to December 1991. Communism was swept away by a rising tide of popular opposition and mass demonstrations, far more quickly than anybody could ever have imagined.

- The process began in Poland in August 1988 when the 'Solidarity' trade union organized huge anti-government strikes. These eventually forced the government to allow free elections, in which the communists were heavily defeated (June 1989). Revolutionary protests rapidly spread to all the other Russian satellite states.
- Hungary was the next to allow free elections, in which the communists again suffered defeat.
- In East Germany, communist leader Eric Honecker wanted to disperse the demonstrations by force, but he was overruled by his colleagues; by the end of 1989 the communist government had resigned. Soon the Berlin Wall was breached, and, most astonishing of all, *in the summer of 1990*, *Germany was re-united*.
- Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania had thrown out their communist governments by the end of 1989, and multi-party elections were held in Yugoslavia in 1990 and in Albania in the spring of 1991.
- By the end of December 1991, the USSR itself had split up into separate republics and Gorbachev had resigned. Communist rule in Russia was over after 74 years.

see section 9.6 and 16.3 for the reasons behind collapse of communism in eastern europe.

(b) How were international relations affected?

Many people in the west thought that with the collapse of communism in eastern Europe, the world's problems would miraculously disappear. But nothing could have been further from the truth and a range of new problems surfaced.

1 *The Cold War was over*
The most immediate result was that the former USSR and its allies were no longer seen by the West as the 'enemy'. In November 1990 the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact signed a treaty agreeing that they were 'no longer adversaries', and that none of their weapons would ever be used except in self-defence. The Cold War was over, and Gorbachev must take much of the credit for bringing it to an end. His determination to work for disarmament broke the stalemate and impressed Reagan, who also deserves much credit for responding so positively to Gorbachev's initiatives. The end of the Cold War was an enormous step forward. However …

2 *New conflicts soon arose*
These were often caused by nationalism. During the Cold War, the USSR and the USA, as we have seen, kept tight control, by force if necessary, over areas where their vital interests might be affected. Now, a conflict which did not directly affect the interests of East or West would probably be left to find its own solution, bloody or otherwise. Nationalism, which had been suppressed by communism, soon re-emerged in some of the former states of the USSR and elsewhere. Sometimes disputes were settled peacefully, for example in Czechoslovakia, where Slovak nationalists insisted on breaking away to form a separate state of Slovakia. However, war broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia (two former republics of the USSR) over disputed territory. There was fighting in Georgia (another former Soviet republic) where the people of the north wanted to form a separate state.

Most tragic of all was Yugoslavia, which broke up into five separate states – Serbia (with Montenegro), Bosnia–Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia. Soon a complex civil war broke out in which Serbia tried to grab as much territory as possible from Croatia. In Bosnia, Serbs, Croats and Muslims fought each other in an attempt to set up states of their own. This increasingly bitter struggle dragged on for almost four years until a ceasefire was arranged in November 1995. So at a time when the states of western Europe were moving into closer union with the European Community, those of eastern Europe were breaking up into even smaller national units.

3 *Supervision of nuclear weapons*
Another fear, now that the Russians and the USA were less willing to act as 'policemen', was that *countries with what the powers considered to be unstable or irresponsible governments might use nuclear weapons* – countries like, for example, Iraq, Iran and Libya. One of the needs of the 1990s therefore was better international supervision and control of nuclear weapons, and also of biological and chemical weapons.

4 *Economic problems*
All the former communist states faced another problem – how to deal with the economic collapse and intense poverty left over from the communist 'command' economies, and how to change to 'free-market' economies. They needed a carefully planned and generous programme of financial help from the West. Otherwise it would be difficult to create stability in eastern Europe. Nationalism and economic unrest could cause a right-wing backlash, especially in Russia itself, which could be just as threatening as communism was once thought to be. There was clearly cause for concern, given the large number of nuclear weapons still in existence in the region. There was the danger that Russia, desperate to raise money, might sell off some of its nuclear weapons to 'unsuitable' governments.

5 *The re-unification of Germany created some problems*
The Poles were very suspicious of a united and powerful Germany, fearing that it might try to take back the former German territory east of the rivers Oder and Neisse, given to

Poland after the Second World War. Germany also found itself providing refuge for people fleeing from disturbances in other states of Europe; by October 1992, at least 16 000 refugees a month were entering Germany. This gave rise to violent protests from right-wing neo-Nazi groups who believed that Germany had problems enough of its own – especially the need to modernize the industry and amenities of the former East Germany – without admitting foreigners.

6 *Relations between the western allies*
The disappearance of communism affected relations between the western allies, the USA, western Europe and Japan. They had been held together by the need to stand firm against communism, but now differences emerged over trade and the extent to which the USA and Japan were prepared to help solve the problems of eastern Europe. For instance, during the war in Bosnia, relations between the USA and the states of western Europe became strained when the USA refused to provide troops for the UN peacekeeping forces, leaving the burden to other member states. The overriding fact now was that the USA was left as the world's only superpower; it remained to be seen how Washington would choose to play its new role on the world stage.

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Chapter

8 The United Nations Organization

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The United Nations Organization (UNO) officially came into existence in October 1945 after the Second World War. It was formed to replace the League of Nations, which had proved incapable of restraining aggressive dictators like Hitler and Mussolini. In setting up the UNO, the great powers tried to eliminate some of the weaknesses which had handicapped the League. The UN Charter was drawn up in San Francisco in 1945, and was based on proposals made at an earlier meeting between the USSR, the USA, China and Britain, held at Dumbarton Oaks (USA) in 1944. *The aims of the UN are*:

- to preserve peace and eliminate war;
- to remove the causes of conflict by encouraging economic, social, educational, scientific and cultural progress throughout the world, especially in under-developed countries;
- to safeguard the rights of all individual human beings, and the rights of peoples and nations.

In spite of the careful framing of the Charter, the UN was unable to solve many of the problems of international relations, particularly those caused by the Cold War. On the other hand it played an important role in a number of international crises by arranging ceasefires and negotiations, and by providing peacekeeping forces. Its successes in non-political work – care of refugees, protection of human rights, economic planning and attempts to deal with problems of world health, population and famine – have been enormous.

8.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

There are now seven main organs of the UN:

- the General Assembly
- the Security Council
- the Secretariat
- the International Court of Justice
- the Trusteeship Council
- the Economic and Social Council
- the International Criminal Court (inaugurated in March 2003).

(a) The General Assembly

This is the meeting together of the representatives from all the member nations; each member can send up to five representatives, though there is only one vote per nation. It meets once a year, starting in September and remaining in session for about three months, but special sessions can be called in times of crisis by the members themselves or by the Security Council. Its function is to discuss and make decisions about international problems, to consider the UN budget and what amount each member should pay, to elect the Security Council members and to supervise the work of the many other UN bodies. *Decisions do not need a unanimous vote as they did in the League Assembly*. Sometimes a simple majority is enough, though on issues which the Assembly thinks are very important, a two-thirds majority is needed. These include decisions about admitting new members or expelling existing members, and about actions to be taken to maintain peace. All speeches and debates are translated into six official UN languages – English, French, Russian, Chinese, Spanish and Arabic.

(b) The Security Council

This sits in permanent session and its function is to deal with crises as they arise, by whatever action seems appropriate, and if necessary by calling on members to take economic or military action against an aggressor. The Council must also approve applications for UN membership, which then require a two-thirds majority in a vote of acceptance by the General Assembly. The Council began with eleven members, *five of them permanent* (*China*, *France*, *USA*, *USSR and Britain*), and the other six elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. In 1965 the number of non-permanent members was increased to ten. Decisions need at least nine of the 15 members to vote in favour, but these must include all five permanent members; this means that *any one of the permanent members can veto a decision and prevent any action being taken*. In practice it has gradually been accepted that abstention by a permanent member does not count as a veto, but this has not been written into the Charter.

In order to secure some action in case of a veto by one of the permanent members, the General Assembly (at the time of the Korean War in 1950) introduced *the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution*; this stated that if the Security Council's proposals were vetoed, the Assembly could meet within 24 hours and decide what action to take, even military intervention if necessary. In cases like this, a decision by the Assembly would only need a two-thirds majority. Again this new rule was not added to the Charter, and the USSR, which used the veto more often than any other member, always maintained that a Security Council veto should take precedence over a General Assembly decision. Nevertheless, the Assembly acted in this way many times, ignoring Russian protests.

In 1950 a problem arose when the new communist People's Republic of China applied for UN membership. The USA vetoed the application, so that the Republic of China (Taiwan) retained its membership and its permanent seat on the Security Council. The USA blocked communist China's application every year for the next 20 years. In 1971, in an effort to improve relations with communist China, the USA at last refrained from vetoing the application; consequently the General Assembly voted that the People's Republic of China should take over Taiwan's membership and permanent Security Council seat.

(c) The Secretariat

This is the 'office staff' of the UN and it consists of over 50 000 employees. They look after the administrative work, preparing minutes of meetings, translations and information.

It is headed by the Secretary-General, who is appointed for a five-year term by the Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. In order to ensure some degree of impartiality, he is not from one of the major powers. He acts as the main spokesperson for the UN and is always at the forefront of international affairs, trying to sort out the world's problems. So far the post has been held by:

- Trygve Lie of Norway (1946–52)
- Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden (1952–61)
- U Thant of Burma (1961–71)
- Kurt Waldheim of Austria (1971–81)
- Javier Pérez de Cuellar of Peru (1981–91)
- Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt (1991–6)
- Kofi Annan of Ghana (1996–2006)
- Ban Ki-moon of South Korea (2006–2016)
- António Guterres of Portugal (since 2017)

(d) The International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice at The Hague (in the Netherlands) has 15 judges, all of different nationalities, elected for nine-year terms (five retiring every third year) by the Assembly and the Security Council jointly. It adjudicates in disputes between states; a number of cases have been successfully dealt with, including a frontier dispute between Holland and Belgium and a disagreement between Britain and Norway over fishing limits. In other cases, however, it was not so successful. In 1984 for example, Nicaragua sued the USA for mining its harbours; the Court judged in favour of Nicaragua and ordered the USA to pay compensation. The USA refused to accept the verdict, and no further action was taken. Although in theory the Security Council has the power to take 'appropriate measures' to enforce the Court's decisions, it has never done so. The Court can only operate successfully when both parties to a dispute agree to accept the verdict, whichever way it should happen to go.

(e) The Trusteeship Council

This replaced the League of Nations Mandates Commission, which had originally come into existence in 1919 to keep an eye on the territories taken away from Germany and Turkey at the end of the First World War. Some of these areas (known as *mandated territories* or *mandates*) had been handed over to the victorious powers, and their job was to govern the territories and prepare them for independence. The Trusteeship Council did its job well and by 1970 most of the mandates had gained their independence.

However, *Namibia remained a problem*, *since South Africa refused to give the area independence*. South Africa, ruled by a government representing the white minority of the population, was unwilling to give independence to a state right on its own frontier that would be ruled by a government representing its black African majority. The UN repeatedly condemned South Africa for its attitude; in 1971 the International Court of Justice ruled that South Africa's occupation of Namibia was a breach of international law and that South Africa must withdraw immediately. South Africa ignored the UN, but as the other states of Africa gradually gained independence under black governments, it became more difficult for South Africa to maintain both its position in Namibia and its own white minority rule. At last in 1990 the pressure of black African nationalism and world opinion forced South Africa to release its grip on Namibia.

(f) The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

This has 27 members, elected by the General Assembly, with one-third retiring each year. It organizes projects concerned with health, education and other social and economic matters. Its task is so enormous that *it has appointed four regional commissions (Europe*, *Latin America*, *Africa*, *Asia and the Far East)*, as well as commissions on population problems, drugs problems, human rights and the status of women. ECOSOC also co-ordinates the work of an astonishing array of other commissions and specialized agencies, around 30 in all. Among the best known are the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The scope of ECOSOC expanded in such a remarkable way that by 1980 more than 90 per cent of the UN's annual expenditure was devoted to ECOSOC activities.

(g) The International Criminal Court (ICC)

The idea of an International Criminal Court to try individuals accused of crimes against humanity was first discussed by a League of Nations convention in 1937, but nothing came of it. The Cold War prevented any further progress until, in 1989, it was suggested again as a possible way of dealing with drug-traffickers and terrorists. Progress towards the creation of a permanent court was again slow, and it was left to the Security Council to set up two special war crimes tribunals to try individuals accused of committing atrocities in 1994 in Rwanda and in 1995 in Bosnia. The most high-profile case was that of Slobodan Milošević, the former Yugoslav president, who was extradited from Belgrade and handed over to UN officials in the Netherlands. His trial opened in July 2001 in The Hague; he faced charges of committing crimes against humanity in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. He was the first former head of state ever to be brought before an international court of justice. The trial dragged on for five for almost five years until he died of a heart attack before a verdict was reached.

Meanwhile, in July 1998 an agreement known as the Rome Statute was signed by 120 member states of the UN to create a permanent court to deal with war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity. The new court, consisting of 18 elected judges, was formally inaugurated in March 2003, and was based in The Hague. However, the US government did not like the idea that some of its citizens might be tried in the court – particularly Americans acting as peacekeepers who might find themselves open to 'politicized prosecutions'. Although the Clinton administration had signed the 1998 agreement, President Bush insisted that the signature should be withdrawn (May 2002). Consequently the USA did not recognize the ICC and by June 2003 had signed separate agreements with 37 states promising that no US personnel would be handed over to the ICC for trial. In some cases the USA threatened to withdraw economic or military aid if the state refused to comply with its wishes.

8.2 HOW DIFFERENT IS THE UNITED NATIONS FROM THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS?

(a) The UN has been more successful

There are some important differences which have tended to make the UN a more successful body than the League.

- The UN spends much more time and resources on economic and social matters and its scope is much wider than that of the League. All the specialized agencies, with

the exception of the International Labour Organization (founded in 1919), were set up in 1945 or later.
- The UN is committed to safeguarding individual human rights, which the League did not get involved in.
- Changes in the procedures of the General Assembly and the Security Council (especially the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution), and the increased power and prestige of the Secretary-General, have enabled the UN, on occasion, to take more decisive action than the League ever achieved.
- The UN has a much wider membership and is therefore more of a genuine world organization than the League, with all the extra prestige that this entails. Both the USA and the USSR were founder-members of the UN, whereas the USA never joined the League. Between 1963 and 1968 no fewer than 43 new members joined the UN, mainly the emerging states of Africa and Asia, and by 1985 membership had reached 159; the League never had more than 50 members. Later, many of the former member states of the USSR joined, and by 1993 the total had reached 183. In 2002, East Timor, which had at last gained its independence from Indonesia with UN help, became the 191st member. Montenegro joined in 2006 and in July 2011 the newly independent Republic of South Sudan became the 193rd member.

(b) Some of the weaknesses of the League remain

Any one of the five permanent members of the Security Council can use its power of veto to prevent decisive action being taken. Like the League, the UN has no permanent army of its own and has to use forces belonging to its member states.

8.3 HOW SUCCESSFUL HAS THE UN BEEN AS A PEACEKEEPING ORGANIZATION?

Although it has had mixed success, it is probably fair to say that *the UN has been more successful than the League in its peacekeeping efforts*, especially in crises which did not directly involve the interests of the great powers, such as the civil war in the Congo (1960–4) and the dispute between the Netherlands and Indonesia over West New Guinea. On the other hand, it has often been just as ineffective as the League in situations – such as the Hungarian rising of 1956 and the 1968 Czech crisis – where the interests of one of the great powers – in this case the USSR – seemed to be threatened, and where the great power decided to ignore or defy the UN. The best way to illustrate the UN's varying degrees of success is to examine some of the major disputes in which it has been involved.

(a) West New Guinea (1946)

In 1946 the UN helped to arrange independence from Holland for the Dutch East Indies, which became Indonesia (see Map 24.3). However, no agreement was reached about the future of West New Guinea (West Irian), which was claimed by both countries. In 1961 fighting broke out; after U Thant had appealed to both sides to reopen negotiations, it was agreed (1962) that the territory should become part of Indonesia. The transfer was organized and policed by a UN force. In this case the UN played a vital role in getting negotiations off the ground, though it did not itself make the decision about West Irian's future.

(b) Palestine (1947)

The dispute between Jews and Arabs in Palestine was brought before the UN in 1947. After an investigation, the UN decided to divide Palestine, setting up the Jewish state of Israel. This was one of the UN's most controversial decisions, and it was not accepted by the majority of Arabs. The UN was unable to prevent a series of wars between Israel and various Arab states (1948–9, 1967 and 1973), though it did useful work arranging ceasefires and providing supervisory forces, while the UN Relief and Works Agency cared for the Arab refugees.

(c) The Korean War (1950–3)

This was the only occasion on which the UN was able to take decisive action in a crisis directly involving the interests of one of the superpowers. When South Korea was invaded by communist North Korea in June 1950, the Security Council immediately passed a resolution condemning North Korea, and called on member states to send help to the South. However, this was possible only because of the temporary absence of the Russian delegates, who would have vetoed the resolution if they had not been boycotting Security Council meetings (since January of that year) in protest at the failure to allow communist China to join the UN. Although the Russian delegates returned smartly, it was too late for them to prevent action going ahead. Troops of 16 countries were able to repel the invasion and preserve the frontier between the two Koreas along the 38th parallel.

Though this was claimed by the West as a great UN success, it was in fact very much an American operation – the vast majority of troops and the Commander-in-Chief, General MacArthur, were American, and the US government had already decided to intervene with force the day before the Security Council decision was taken. Only the absence of the Russians enabled the USA to turn it into a UN operation. This was a situation not likely to be repeated, since the USSR would take good care to be present at all future Council sessions.

The Korean War had important results for the future of the UN: one was the passing of *the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution*, which would permit a Security Council veto to be bypassed by a General Assembly vote. Another was the launching of *a bitter attack by the Russians on Secretary-General Trygve Lie* for what they considered to be his biased role in the crisis. His position soon became impossible and he eventually agreed to retire early, to be replaced by Dag Hammarskjöld.

(d) The Suez Crisis (1956)

This arguably showed the UN at its best. When President Nasser of Egypt suddenly nationalized the Suez Canal, many of whose shares were owned by the British and French, both these powers protested strongly and sent troops 'to protect their interests'. At the same time the Israelis invaded Egypt from the east; the real aim of all three states was to bring down President Nasser. A Security Council resolution condemning force was vetoed by Britain and France, whereupon the General Assembly, by a majority of 64 votes to 5, condemned the invasions and called for a withdrawal of troops. In view of the weight of opinion against them, the aggressors agreed to withdraw, provided the UN ensured a reasonable settlement over the canal and kept the Arabs and Israelis from slaughtering each other. A UN force of 5000, made up of troops from ten different countries, moved in, while the British, French and Israelis went home. The prestige of the UN and of Dag Hammarskjöld, who handled the operation with considerable skill, was greatly enhanced,

though American and Russian pressure was also important in bringing about a ceasefire. However, the UN was not so successful in the 1967 Arab–Israeli conflict.

(e) The Hungarian Rising (1956)

This took place at the same time as the Suez Crisis, and showed the UN at its most ineffective. When the Hungarians tried to exert their independence from Russian control, Soviet troops entered Hungary to crush the revolt. The Hungarian government appealed to the UN, but the Russians vetoed a Security Council resolution calling for a withdrawal of their forces. The General Assembly passed the same resolution and set up a committee to investigate the problem; but the Russians refused to co-operate with the committee and no progress could be made. The contrast with Suez was striking: there, Britain and France were willing to bow to international pressure; the Russians simply ignored the UN, and nothing could be done.

(f) Civil war in the Congo (1960–4)

Here the UN mounted its most complex operation to date**,** except for Korea. When the Congo (known as Zaire since 1971) dissolved into chaos immediately after gaining independence, a UN force numbering over 20 000 at its largest managed to restore some sort of precarious order. A special UN Congo Fund was set up to help with the recovery and development of the ravaged country. *But the financial cost was so high that the UN was brought close to bankruptcy*, especially when the USSR, France and Belgium refused to pay their contributions towards the cost of the operations, because they disapproved of the way the UN had handled the situation. The war also cost the life of Dag Hammarskjöld, who was killed in a plane crash in the Congo.

(g) Cyprus

Cyprus has kept the UN busy since 1964. A British colony since 1878, the island was granted independence in 1960. In 1963 civil war broke out between the Greeks, who made up about 80 per cent of the population, and the Turks. A UN peacekeeping force arrived in March 1964; an uneasy peace was restored, but it needed 3000 UN troops permanently stationed in Cyprus to prevent Greeks and Turks tearing each other apart. That was not the end of the trouble, though: in 1974 the Greek Cypriots tried to unite the island with Greece. This prompted the Turkish Cypriots, helped by invading Turkish army troops, to seize the north of the island for their own territory. They went on to expel all Greeks who were unfortunate enough to be living in that area. The UN condemned the invasion but was unable to remove the Turks. UN forces did at least achieve a ceasefire and are still policing the frontier between Greeks and Turks. However, the UN has still not been successful in finding an acceptable constitution or any other compromise. The most recent attempt – the Annan Plan of 2004 – was accepted by the Turks but rejected by the Greeks.

(h) Kashmir

In Kashmir the UN found itself in a similar situation to the one in Cyprus. After 1947, this large province, lying between India and Pakistan (see Map 24.1), was claimed by both

states. Already in 1948 the UN had negotiated a ceasefire after fighting broke out. At this point the Indians were occupying the southern part of Kashmir, the Pakistanis the northern part, and for the next 16 years the UN policed the ceasefire line between the two zones. When Pakistani troops invaded the Indian zone in 1965, a short war developed, but once again the UN successfully intervened and hostilities ceased. The original dispute still remained, however, and in 1999 there were violent clashes as Pakistanis again unsuccessfully invaded the Indian zone. There seemed little prospect of the UN or any other agency finding a permanent solution.

(i) The Czechoslovak crisis (1968)

This was almost a repeat performance of the Hungarian rising 12 years earlier. When the Czechs showed what Moscow considered to be too much independence, Russian and other Warsaw Pact troops were sent in to enforce obedience to the USSR. The Security Council tried to pass a motion condemning this action, but the Russians vetoed it, claiming that the Czech government had asked for their intervention. Although the Czechs denied this, there was nothing the UN could do in view of the USSR's refusal to co-operate.

(j) The Lebanon

While civil war was raging in the Lebanon (1975–87), matters were further complicated by a frontier dispute in the south of the country between Lebanese Christians (aided by the Israelis) and Palestinians. In March 1978 the Israelis invaded South Lebanon in order to destroy Palestinian guerrilla bases from which attacks were being made on northern Israel. In June 1978 the Israelis agreed to withdraw, provided the UN assumed responsibility for policing the frontier area. *The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL*), consisting of about 7000 troops, was sent to South Lebanon. It supervised the Israeli withdrawal and had some success in maintaining relative peace in the area; but it was a constant struggle against frontier violations, assassinations, terrorism and the seizing of hostages.

During the early 1990s a new enemy began to harass Israel from bases in South Lebanon: this was the Muslim Shi'ite group known as Hezbollah, which, according to the Israeli government, was backed by Iran and Syria. In retaliation the Israelis launched a major attack on South Lebanon (April 1996) and occupied most of the region until 1999. Once again UNIFIL helped to supervise an Israeli withdrawal and the force was increased to around 8000. In 2002, as the region seemed calmer than for many years, UNIFIL was reduced to some 3000. UNIFIL worked hard to strengthen the Lebanese army, providing training and equipment. Eventually the two forces were able to work together to maintain stability, though a permanent solution still seemed far off. In July 2006 Hezbollah ambushed an Israeli patrol; eight Israeli soldiers were killed and two taken prisoner. The Israelis responded immediately: demanding the return of the captured soldiers, they blockaded Lebanon from the sea, bombed Beirut and destroyed Hezbollah's headquarters. Hezbollah retaliated by firing rockets into Israel at a rate of over a hundred a day. It was mid-August before the UN succeeded in arranging a ceasefire. UNIFIL was increased to 12 000 and there was relative calm for the next four years. Early in 2011 violent incidents began again. The Israelis were still refusing to move out of a small area around the village of Gharjah, north of the withdrawal line agreed in 2006.

There were several exchanges of fire between the Lebanese army and the Israeli Defence Force, terrorist attacks on UNIFIL itself and the firing of rockets into Israel.

(k) The Iran–Iraq War (1980–8)

The UN was successful in bringing an end to the long-drawn-out war between Iran and Iraq. After years of attempting to mediate, the UN at last negotiated a cease-fire, though admittedly they were helped by the fact that both sides were close to exhaustion.

8.4 UN PEACEKEEPING SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR

The end of the Cold War unfortunately did not mean the end of potential conflict: there were a number of disputes still rolling on, which had originated many years earlier; the Middle East continued to be volatile, and there were more problems in south-east Asia and Africa. Between 1990 and 2003 the UN undertook well over 30 peacekeeping operations; at the peak of their involvement, in the mid-1990s, there were over 80 000 troops on active service, from 77 countries. A few examples illustrate the growing complexity of the problems facing the UN and the increasing obstacles making success more difficult.

(a) The 1991 Gulf War

UN action during the Gulf War of 1991 was impressive. When Saddam Hussein of Iraq sent his troops to invade and capture the tiny, but extremely rich, neighbouring state of Kuwait (August 1990), the UN Security Council warned him to withdraw or face the consequences. When he refused, a large UN force was sent to Saudi Arabia. In a short and decisive campaign, Iraqi troops were driven out, suffering heavy losses, and Kuwait was liberated. However, critics of the UN complained that Kuwait had received help only because the West needed her oil supplies; other small nations, which had no value to the West, had received no help when they were invaded by larger neighbours (for example East Timor, taken over by Indonesia in 1975).

(b) Cambodia/Kampuchea

Problems in Cambodia (Kampuchea) dragged on for nearly 20 years, *but eventually the UN was able to arrange a solution*. In 1975 the Khmer Rouge, a communist guerrilla force led by Pol Pot, seized power from the right-wing government of Prince Sihanouk. Over the next three years Pol Pot's brutal regime slaughtered about a third of the population, until in 1978 a Vietnamese army invaded the country. They drove out the Khmer Rouge and set up a new government. At first the UN, prompted by the USA, condemned this action, although many people thought Vietnam had done the people of Cambodia a great service by getting rid of the cruel Pol Pot regime. But it was all part of the Cold War, which meant that any action by Vietnam, an ally of the USSR, would be condemned by the USA. The end of the Cold War enabled the UN to organize and police a solution. Vietnamese forces were withdrawn (September 1989), and after a long period of negotiations and persuasion, elections were held (June 1993), won by Prince Sihanouk's party. The result was widely accepted (though not by what was left of the Khmer Rouge, which refused to take part in the elections), and the country gradually began to settle down.

(c) Mozambique

Mozambique, *which gained independence from Portugal in 1975*, *was torn by civil war for many years*. By 1990 the country was in ruins and both sides were exhausted. Although a ceasefire agreement had been signed in Rome (October 1992) at a conference organized by the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian government, it was not holding. There were many violations of the ceasefire and there was no way that elections could be held in such an atmosphere. The UN now became fully involved, operating a programme of demobilizing and disarming the various armies, distributing humanitarian relief and preparing for elections, which took place successfully in October 1994. Joachim Chissano of FRELIMO was elected president and re-elected for a further term in 1999.

(d) Somalia

Somalia disintegrated into civil war in 1991 when the dictator Siad Barré was overthrown. A power struggle developed between rival supporters of Generals Aidid and Ali Mohammed; the situation was chaotic as food supplies and communications broke down and thousands of refugees were fleeing into Kenya. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) asked for UN help, and 37 000 UN troops, mainly American, arrived (December 1992) to safeguard the aid and to restore law and order by disarming the 'warlords'. However, the warlords, especially Aidid, were not prepared to be disarmed, and UN troops began to suffer casualties. The Americans withdrew their troops (March 1994), and the remaining UN troops were withdrawn in March 1995, leaving the warlords to fight it out. It was a humiliating backdown; but in fact the UN had set itself an impossible task from the beginning – to forcibly disarm two extremely powerful armies which were determined to carry on fighting each other, and to combine this with a humanitarian relief programme. At the same time the UN took no action in the civil war and genocide taking place in Rwanda in 1994. UN military interventions had most chance of success when, as in Korea in 1950–3 and the 1991 Gulf War, UN troops actively supported one side against the other.

(e) Bosnia

A similar situation developed in Bosnia. In the civil war between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs, the UN failed to send enough troops to impose law and order. This was partly because both the European Community and the USA were reluctant to get involved. There was further humiliation for the UN in July 1995 when they were unable to prevent Serb forces from capturing two towns – Srebrenica and Zepa – which the Security Council had designated as safe areas for Muslims. UN helplessness was underlined when the Serbs went on to murder around 8000 Muslim men in Srebrenica.

(f) Iraq – The overthrow of Saddam Hussein

In March 2003 the USA and Britain launched an invasion of Iraq, on the grounds that they intended to get rid of its weapons of mass destruction and to free the Iraqi people from the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. UN weapons inspectors had already spent months in Iraq searching for weapons of mass destruction, but had found nothing of any significance. The attack went ahead even though the UN Security Council had not given its authorization.

The USA and Britain had tried to push a resolution through the Council approving military action, but France, Russia, China and Germany wanted to allow Saddam more time to co-operate with the weapons inspectors. When it became clear that France and Russia were prepared to veto any such resolution, the USA and Britain resolved to go ahead unilaterally, without putting the resolution to a Security Council vote. They claimed that Saddam's violations of earlier UN resolutions were a justification for war.

The US and British action was a serious blow to the prestige of the UN. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, speaking at the opening of the annual session of the General Assembly in September 2003, said that their action had brought the UN to 'a fork in the road'. Until then, all states needed the authorization of the Security Council if they intended to use force beyond the normal right of self-defence, as prescribed by Article 51 of the UN Charter. However, if states continued to act unilaterally and pre-emptively against a perceived threat, that would present a fundamental challenge to the entire principles of world peace and stability on which the UN was based, and which it had been striving to achieve, however imperfectly, for the last 58 years. This, he said, could only set precedents resulting in 'a proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force'.

8.5 WHAT OTHER WORK IS THE UN RESPONSIBLE FOR?

Although it is the UN's role as peacekeeper and international mediator which most often gets into the headlines, the majority of its work is concerned with its less spectacular aims of safeguarding human rights and encouraging economic, social, educational and cultural progress throughout the world. There is only enough space in this book to look at a few examples.

(a) The Human Rights Commission

This works under the supervision of ECOSOC and tries to ensure that all governments treat their people in a civilized way. *A 30-point Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948; this means that every person, no matter what country he or she lives in, should have certain basic rights, *the most important of which are the rights to*:

- a standard of living high enough to keep him (or her) and his family in good health;
- be free from slavery, racial discrimination, arrest and imprisonment without trial, and torture;
- have a fair trial in public and to be presumed innocent until proved guilty;
- move about freely in his/her country and be able to leave the country;
- get married, have children, work, own property and vote in elections;
- have opinions and express them freely.

Later the Commission, concerned about the plight of children in many countries, produced *a Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959). Foremost among the rights every child should be able to expect are*:

- adequate food and medical care;
- free education;
- adequate opportunity for relaxation and play (to guard against excessive child labour);
- protection from racial, religious and any other type of discrimination.

All member governments are expected to produce a report every three years on the state of human rights in their country. However, the problem for the UN is that many states do not produce the reports and they ignore the terms of the Declarations. When this happens, all the UN can do is publicize countries where the most flagrant violations of human rights take place, and hope that pressure of world opinion will influence the governments concerned. For example, the UN campaigned against *apartheid* in South Africa and against General Pinochet's brutal treatment of political prisoners in Chile Mary Robinson (a former president of the Irish Republic), who was UN Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997 until 2002, worked hard to raise world awareness of the problems by naming and shaming guilty states. Unfortunately she made some powerful enemies by her outspoken criticism of their human rights records – among them Russia, China and the USA (all permanent members of the Security Council). Secretary-General Annan was pleased with her work and wanted her to serve another term as Commissioner. However, she was replaced by Sergio Vieira de Mello, and it was widely reported that her second term had been blocked by the USA.

(b) The International Labour Organization (ILO)

The ILO operates from its headquarters in Geneva. *It works on the principles that*:

- every person is entitled to a job;
- there should be equal opportunities for everybody to get jobs, irrespective of race, sex or religion;
- there should be minimum standards of decent working conditions;
- workers should have the right to organize themselves into unions and other associations in order to negotiate for better conditions and pay (this is known as collective bargaining);
- there should be full social security provision for all workers (such as unemployment, health and maternity benefits).

The ILO does excellent work providing help for countries trying to improve working conditions, and it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969. It sends experts out to demonstrate new equipment and techniques, sets up training centres in developing countries and runs the International Centre for Advanced Technology and Vocational Training in Turin (Italy), which provides vital high-level training for people from all over the Third World. Again though, the ILO, like the Human Rights Commission, is always faced with the problem of what to do when governments ignore the rules. For example, many governments, including those of communist countries, and of Latin American countries such as Chile, Argentina and Mexico, would not allow workers to organize trade unions.

(c) The World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO is one of the UN's most successful agencies. It aims to bring the world to a point where all its peoples are not just free of disease, but are 'at a high level of health'. One of its first jobs was to tackle a cholera epidemic in Egypt in 1947 which threatened to spread through Africa and the Middle East. Quick action by a UN team soon brought the epidemic under control and it was eliminated in a few weeks. The WHO now keeps a permanent cholera vaccine bank in case of further outbreaks, and wages a continual battle against other diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy. The Organization provides money to train doctors, nurses and other health workers for developing countries,

keeps governments informed about new drugs and provides free contraceptive pills for women in Third World countries.

One of its most striking achievements was to eliminate smallpox in the 1980s. At the same time it seemed well on the way towards eliminating malaria, but during the 1970s a new strain of malaria appeared which had developed a resistance to anti-malaria drugs. Research into new anti-malaria drugs became a WHO priority. In March 2000 it was reported that the problem of tuberculosis was growing worse – killing two million people every year.

The most serious world health problem in recent years has been the AIDS epidemic. The WHO has done excellent work collecting evidence and statistics, producing reports and putting pressure on pharmaceutical companies to reduce prices of drugs to treat the condition. In June 2001 the UN global AIDS fund was set up, which aimed to raise $10 billion a year to fight the disease.

(d) The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The FAO aims to raise living standards by encouraging improvements in agricultural production. It was responsible for introducing new varieties of maize and rice which have a higher yield and are less susceptible to disease. FAO experts show people in poor countries how to increase food production by the use of fertilizers, new techniques and new machinery, and cash is provided to fund new projects. Its main problem is having to deal with emergencies caused by drought, floods, civil war and other disasters, when food supplies need to be rushed into a country as quickly as possible. The Organization has done an excellent job, and there is no doubt that many more people would have died from starvation and malnutrition without its work.

(e) The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Operating from its headquarters in Paris, UNESCO does its best to encourage the spread of literacy; it also fosters international co-operation between scientists, scholars and artists in all fields, working on the theory that *the best way to avoid war is by educating people's minds in the pursuit of peace*. Much of its time and resources are spent setting up schools and teacher-training colleges in under-developed countries. Sometimes it becomes involved in one-off cultural and scientific projects. For example, it organized an International Hydrological Decade (1965–75), during which it helped to finance research into the problem of world water resources. After the 1968 floods in Florence, UNESCO played an important part in repairing and restoring damaged art treasures and historic buildings. During the 1980s UNESCO came under criticism from western powers which claimed that it was becoming too politically motivated.

(f) The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF was founded originally in 1946 to help children left homeless by the Second World War. It dealt with this problem so efficiently that it was decided to make it a permanent agency and the word 'emergency' was dropped from its title (1953). Its new function was *to help improve the health and living standards of children all over the world*, *especially in poorer countries*. It works closely with the WHO, setting up health centres, training health workers and running health education and sanitation schemes. In spite of these

efforts it was still a horrifying fact that in 1983, 15 million children died under the age of 5, a figure equivalent to the combined under-5 population of Britain, France, Italy, Spain and West Germany. In that year UNICEF launched its 'child health revolution' campaign, which was designed to reduce the child death rate by simple methods such as encouraging breastfeeding (which is more hygienic than bottle-feeding) and immunizing babies against common diseases such as measles, diphtheria, polio and tetanus.

(g) The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

This agency was set up in 1950 to deal with the problem of Arab refugees from Palestine who were forced to leave their homes when Palestine was divided up to form the new state of Israel. UNRWA did a remarkable job providing basic food, clothing, shelter and medical supplies. Later, as it became clear that the refugee camps were going to be permanent, it began to build schools, hospitals, houses and training centres to enable refugees to get jobs and make the camps self-supporting.

(h) Financial and economic agencies

1 The International Monetary Fund (IMF)
The IMF is designed to foster co-operation between nations in order to encourage the growth of trade and the full development of nations' economic potential. It allows short-term loans to countries in financial difficulties, provided that their economic policies meet with the IMF's approval and that they are prepared to change policies if the IMF thinks it necessary. By the mid-1970s many Third World nations were heavily in debt, and in 1977 the IMF set up an emergency fund. However, there was a great deal of resentment among the poorer nations when the IMF Board of Governors (dominated by the rich western countries, especially the USA, which provide most of the cash) began to attach conditions to the loans. Jamaica and Tanzania, for example, were required to change their socialist policies before loans were allowed. This was seen by many as unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of member states.

2 The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank)
This provides loans for specific development projects, such as building dams to generate electricity, and introducing new agricultural techniques and family planning campaigns. Again though, the USA, which provides the largest share of the cash for the bank, controls its decisions. When Poland and Czechoslovakia applied for loans, they were both refused because they were communist states. Both of them resigned from the Bank and from the IMF in disgust, Poland in 1950 and Czechoslovakia in 1954.

3 The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
This agreement was first signed in 1947 when member states of the UN agreed to reduce some of their tariffs (taxes on imports) in order to encourage international trade. Members continue to meet, under the supervision of ECOSOC, to try and keep tariffs as low as possible throughout the world. In January 1995 the GATT became the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its aim was to liberalize and monitor world trade and to resolve trade disputes.

4 The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
The conference first met in 1964 and soon became a permanent body. Its role is to encourage the development of industry in the Third World and to pressurize rich countries into buying Third World products.

(i) The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

This began life originally as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, set up in 1991 to enable the UN to respond more effectively to natural disasters and 'complex emergencies' (the UN phrase for human disasters caused by wars and other political events). Its functions were expanded in 1998 to include the co-ordination of responses to all humanitarian disasters and projects for human development; at the same time it assumed its present title OCHA. It had a staff of some 860 members, some based in New York, some in Geneva and some working in the field.

Much valuable relief work was done in a whole series of crisis situations caused by earthquakes, hurricanes and floods; help was mainly needed in poor countries with less developed infrastructures and high population densities. UN statistics suggested that in 2003 alone, some 200 million victims of natural disasters and 45 million victims of 'complex emergencies' received aid, either supplied directly or organized by the UN. However, a recurring criticism of the UN's role was that it lacked the power and the resources to operate as effectively as it might.

The greatest challenge to OCHA came at the beginning of 2005 in what became known as the tsunami disaster. On Boxing Day 2004, two huge earthquakes occurred in the Indian Ocean, triggering off a series of massive tidal waves known as *tsunami*. No effective warning system existed, and within hours the tsunami were battering the shores of many countries around the Indian Ocean, including Indonesia, India, the Maldive Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and even Somalia on the east coast of Africa. It soon became apparent that this was a catastrophe of the highest magnitude; at least 150 000 people were killed and thousands more were missing. Worst affected were Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, where, in some coastal areas, entire towns and villages had been destroyed. A massive and complex relief operation was needed immediately, but the problems to be faced were overwhelming.

The response from around the world was heartening: ordinary people gave unstintingly to the appeals for money; foreign governments promised enormous amounts of cash; 11 states sent troops, ships and aircraft; over 400 non-government agencies and charities such as Christian Aid, the Red Cross, Red Crescent, the Salvation Army, Oxfam and Médecins sans Frontières got involved within a few days. An Oxfam spokesman said that the UN was doing as good a job as anybody could reasonably expect in the horrific circumstances, and that they were grateful for the plain-speaking leadership of Mr Jan Egeland, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, and of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. But there was a long-term operation ahead: after saving tens of thousands of people from death by starvation and disease, the next step was to rebuild communities and restore infrastructures.

8.6 VERDICT ON THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

The UN has been in existence for well over half a century, but it is still nowhere near achieving its basic aims. The world is still full of economic and social problems; acts of aggression and wars continue. *The UN's failures were caused to some extent by weaknesses in its system*.

(a) The lack of a permanent UN army

This means that it is difficult to prevail upon powerful states to accept its decisions if they choose to put self-interest first. If persuasion and the pressure of world opinion fail, the UN has to rely on member nations to provide troops to enable it to enforce decisions. For example, the

USSR was able to ignore UN demands for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Hungary (1956) and Afghanistan (1980). UN involvement in Somalia (1992–5) and Bosnia (1992–5) showed the impossibility of the UN being able to stop a war when the warring parties were not ready to stop fighting. The USA and Britain were determined to attack Iraq in 2003 without UN authorization, and the UN could do nothing about it, especially now that the USA was the world's only superpower – by far the most powerful state in the world.

(b) When should the UN become involved?

There is a problem about exactly when the UN should become involved during the course of a dispute. Sometimes it hangs back too long, so that the problem becomes more difficult to solve; sometimes it hesitates so long that it scarcely becomes involved at all; this happened with the war in Vietnam and the war in Angola. This left the UN open to accusations of indecision and lack of firmness. It caused some states to put more faith in their own regional organizations such as NATO for keeping the peace, and many agreements were worked out without involving the UN; for example, the end of the Vietnam War, the Camp David peace between Israel and Egypt in 1979 and the settlement of the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe problem in the same year.

At this time, critics were claiming that the UN was becoming irrelevant and was no more than an arena for propaganda speeches. Part of the problem was that the Security Council was hampered by the veto which its permanent members could use. Although the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution could offset this to some extent, the veto could still cause long delays before decisive action was taken. If a potential aggressor knew that his forces would be met by a UN armed force, equipped and mandated to fight, this would be a powerful disincentive; for example if a UN force had been deployed on the Kuwait side of the Iraqi–Kuwait frontier in 1990, or on the Croatian side of the Serbia–Croatia border in 1991, hostilities might well have been prevented from breaking out.

(c) The increasing membership of the UN from the 1970s

The increasing membership of the UN during the 1970s brought new problems. By 1970 members from the Third World (Africa and Asia) were in a clear majority. As these nations began to work more and more together, it meant that only they could be certain of having their resolutions passed, and it became increasingly difficult for both Western and Communist blocs to get their resolutions through the General Assembly. The western nations could no longer have things all their own way and they began to criticize the Third World bloc for being too 'political'; by this, they meant acting in a way the West disapproved of. For example, in 1974 UNESCO passed resolutions condemning 'colonialism' and 'imperialism'. In 1979 when the Western bloc introduced a General Assembly motion condemning terrorism, it was defeated by the Arab states and their supporters.

Friction reached crisis point in 1983 at the UNESCO General Congress. Many western nations, including the USA, accused UNESCO of being inefficient and wasteful and of having unacceptable political aims. What brought matters to a head was a proposal by some communist states for the internal licensing of foreign journalists. According to the USA, this would lead to a situation in which member states could exercise an effective censorship of each other's media organizations. Consequently the Americans announced that they would withdraw from UNESCO on 1 January 1985, since it had become 'hostile to the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press'. Britain and Singapore withdrew in 1986 for similar reasons. Britain rejoined in 1997 and the USA followed in 2002.

(d) There is a waste of effort and resources among the agencies

Some of the agencies sometimes seem to duplicate each other's work. Critics claim that the WHO and the FAO overlap too much. The FAO was criticized in 1984 for spending too much on administration and not enough on improving agricultural systems. GATT and UNCTAD even seem to be working against each other: GATT tries to eliminate tariffs and anything else that restricts trade, whereas UNCTAD tries to get preferential treatment for the products of Third World countries.

(e) Shortage of funds

Throughout its history the UN has always been short of funds. The vast scope of its work means that it needs incredibly large sums of money to finance its operations. It is entirely dependent on contributions from member states. Each state pays a regular annual contribution based on its general wealth and ability to pay. In addition, members pay a proportion of the cost of each peacekeeping operation, and they are also expected to contribute towards the expenses of the special agencies. *Many member states refused to pay* from time to time, either because of financial difficulties of their own, or as a mark of disapproval of UN policies; 1986 was a bad year financially: no fewer than 98 of its members owed money, chief among them being the USA, which withheld more than $100 million until the UN reformed its budgeting system and curbed its extravagance. The Americans wanted the countries that gave most to have more say in how the money was spent, but most smaller members rejected this as undemocratic. As one of Sri Lanka's delegates put it: 'in our political processes at home, the wealthy do not have more votes than the poor. We should like this to be the practice in the UN as well.'

In 1987 changes were introduced giving the main financial contributors more control over spending, and the financial situation soon improved. However, expenses soared alarmingly in the early 1990s as the UN became involved in a series of new crises, in the Middle East (Gulf War), Yugoslavia and Somalia. In August 1993 the Secretary-General, Dr Boutros-Ghali, revealed that many states were well in arrears with their payments. He warned that unless there was an immediate injection of cash from the world's rich states, all the UN's peacekeeping operations would be in jeopardy. Yet the Americans and Europeans felt that they already paid too much – the USA (with about 30 per cent), the European Community (about 35 per cent) and Japan (11 per cent) paid three-quarters of the expenses, and there was a feeling that there were many other wealthy states which could afford to contribute much more than they were doing.

In spite of all these criticisms, *it would be wrong to write the UN off as a failure*, and there can be no doubt that the world would be a far worse place without it.

- It provides a world assembly where representatives of around 190 nations can come together and talk to each other. Even the smallest nation has a chance to make itself heard in a world forum.
- Although it has not prevented wars, it has been successful in bringing some wars to an end more quickly, and has prevented further conflict. A great deal of human suffering and bloodshed have been prevented by the actions of the UN peacekeeping forces and refugee agencies. At the present time (2012), there are around 85 000 UN peacekeepers in action across the world.
- The UN has done valuable work investigating and publicizing human rights violations under repressive regimes like the military governments of Chile and Zaire. In this way it has slowly been able to influence governments by bringing international pressure to bear on them.

- Perhaps its most important achievement has been to stimulate international co-operation on economic, social and technical matters. Millions of people, especially in poorer countries, are better off thanks to the work of the UN agencies. It continues to involve itself in current problems: UNESCO, the ILO and the WHO are running a joint project to help drug addicts and there has been a series of 15 conferences on AIDS in an attempt to co-ordinate the struggle against this terrible scourge, particularly in Africa.

8.7 WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE UN?

Many people thought that with the end of the Cold War, most of the world's problems would disappear. In fact, this did not happen; during the 1990s there seemed to be more conflicts than ever before, and the world seemed to be less and less stable. Obviously there was still a vitally important role for the UN to play as international peacekeeper, and many people were anxious for the UN to reform and strengthen itself.

Kofi Annan, who became Secretary-General in December 1996, had gained an excellent reputation over the previous few years as head of UN peacekeeping operations. He was well aware of the organization's weaknesses and was determined to do something about them. He ordered a thorough review of all UN peace operations; the resulting report, published in 2000, recommended, among other things, that the UN should maintain permanent brigade-size forces of 5000 troops, which would be ready for immediate deployment, commanded by military professionals. The spread of terrorism, especially with the September 2001 attacks on New York, prompted Annan, now in his second term as Secretary-General, to produce his *Agenda for Further Change* (September 2002). This was a plan for reforms to strengthen the UN's role in fighting terrorism, and it included a much-needed streamlining of the cumbersome budget system. These things take time, but none of the suggested reforms is beyond the bounds of possibility.

The really serious problem, which had been brewing ever since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the USA as sole superpower, was about the future relationship between the UN and the USA. Tensions began to mount as soon as the Bush administration took office in 2001: within its first year the new government rejected the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (which aimed to limit the emission of greenhouse gases) and the Rome Statute of the new UN International Criminal Court, as well as Security Council offers of a resolution authorizing a war against terrorism (this was because it prefers to conduct its own self-defence in whatever way it chooses). Tensions reached a climax in March 2003, when the US government, aided and abetted by the UK, decided to attack Iraq, *without UN authorization and against the wishes of the majority of UN members*. The USA was so disproportionately powerful that it could ignore the UN and act as it pleased unless the UN delivered the outcome it wanted.

An important American technique in its quest to control the UN was to secure the appointment of a sympathetic Secretary-General. A prime example was Kofi Annan, Secretary-General from 1996 until 2006, who whole heartedly supported the American line on every major UN involvement except one – Iraq. In a book published in November 2006 to mark the end of Annan's two terms as Secretary-General, James Traub chronicles his rise to the top. Since 1993 Annan had been in charge of all UN peacekeeping operations under Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali. However, Dr Boutros-Ghali had displeased Washington by refusing to send a UN mission into Somalia and delaying the NATO bombing of Serbia. In both cases Annan had supported the American line. In 1996 all the signs were that Boutros-Ghali would have his mandate extended for another five years. But President Clinton was determined to get rid of him; it was relentless pressure from the Clinton administration that got Kofi Annan chosen instead of Boutros-Ghali.

Consequently when NATO launched its bombing attack on Yugoslavia early in 1999, instead of condemning it as a blatant violation of the UN Charter – which it most certainly was – Annan announced that it was a legitimate action.

However, the attack on Iraq in 2003 was more difficult for Annan. When the joint US and British operation against Iraq was launched without a second Security Council Resolution authorizing the attack, Annan was eventually forced to admit that the invasion had been illegal. When he was asked in a BBC interview, 'Are you bothered that the US is becoming an unrestrainable, unilateral superpower?' he replied: 'I think in the end everybody is concluding that it is best to work together with our allies.' That innocent remark sums up the whole situation: the challenge for the UN over the coming years is to find a way to harness and make use of the power and influence of the USA instead of being impeded or stampeded by it.

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Chapter

9 The Two Europes, East and West since 1945

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, Europe was in turmoil. Many areas, especially in Germany, Italy, Poland and the western parts of the USSR, had been devastated, and even the victorious powers, Britain and the USSR, were in serious financial difficulties because of the expense of the war. There was a huge job of reconstruction to be done, and many people thought that the best way to go about this was by a joint effort. Some even thought in terms of a united Europe, rather like the United States of America, in which the European states would come together under a federal system of government. However, Europe soon split into two over the American Marshall Plan to promote recovery in Europe. The nations of western Europe gladly made use of American aid, but the USSR refused to allow the countries of eastern Europe to accept it, for fear that their own control over the area would be undermined. From 1947 onwards the two parts of Europe developed separately, kept apart by Joseph Stalin's 'iron curtain'.

The states of western Europe recovered surprisingly quickly from the effects of the war, thanks to a combination of American aid, an increase in the world demand for European products, rapid technological advances and careful planning by governments. Some moves took place towards unity, including the setting up of NATO and the Council of Europe (both in 1949), and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. In Britain, enthusiasm for this type of unity developed more slowly than in other countries for fear that it would threaten British sovereignty. The British decided not to join the EEC when it was first set up in 1957; when they changed their minds in 1961, the French vetoed their entry, and it was 1972 before it was finally agreed that Britain could become a member.

Meanwhile the communist states of eastern Europe had to be content to be satellites of the USSR. They, too, moved towards a sort of economic and political unity with the introduction of the Molotov Plan (1947), the formation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in 1949 and the Warsaw Pact (1955). Until his death in 1953, Stalin tried to make all these states as much like the USSR as possible, but after 1953 they began to show more independence. Yugoslavia under Tito had already developed a more decentralized system in which the communes were an important element. Poland and Romania successfully introduced variations, but the Hungarians (1956) and the Czechs (1968) went too far and found themselves invaded by Soviet troops and brought to heel. During the 1970s the states of eastern Europe enjoyed a period of comparative prosperity, but in the 1980s they felt the effects of world depression.

Dissatisfaction with the communist system began to grow; in a short period from mid-1988 until the end of 1991, communism collapsed in the USSR and in all the states of eastern Europe except Albania, where it survived until March 1992. Germany, which had been divided into two separate states, one communist and one non-communist, since soon after the war, was reunified (October 1990), becoming once again the most powerful

state in Europe. With the end of communism, Yugoslavia sadly disintegrated into a long civil war (1991–5).

In the west the European Community, which from 1992 was known as the European Union, continued to function successfully. Many of the former communist states began to apply to join the Union; in 2004 there were 25 members, and in 2007 the total reached 27 with the addition of Bulgaria and Romania. But the enlargement brought its own problems.

9.1 THE STATES OF WESTERN EUROPE

Shortage of space allows only a brief look at the three most influential states in mainland Europe.

(a) France

Under the Fourth Republic (1946–58) France was politically weak, and though her industry was modernized and flourishing, agriculture seemed to be stagnating. Governments were weak because the new constitution gave the president very little power. There were five major parties and this meant that governments were coalitions, which were constantly changing: in the 12 years of the Fourth Republic there were 25 different governments, which were mostly too weak to rule effectively. There were a number of disasters:

- French defeat in Indo-China (1954);
- failure in Suez (1956);
- rebellion in Algeria, which brought the government down in 1958.

General de Gaulle came out of retirement to lead the country; he introduced a new constitution giving the president more power (which became the basis of the Fifth Republic), and gave Algeria independence. With the Cold War continuing, De Gaulle successfully demonstrated that France was a strong, independent power, not a weak country in decline. He built France's own nuclear deterrent, withdrew French forces from NATO command, condemned the USA's war in Vietnam, criticized Israeli behaviour in the Middle East and vetoed Britain's entry into the Common Market. De Gaulle retired in 1969 after a wave of strikes and demonstrations protesting against, among other things, the authoritarian and undemocratic nature of the regime.

The Fifth Republic continued to provide stable government under the next two presidents, both right-wingers – Georges Pompidou (1969–74) and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1974–81). François Mitterand, the socialist leader, had a long period as president, from 1981 until 1995, when Jacques Chirac of the right-wing RPR (Rassemblement pour la République) was elected president for the next seven years. The dominant issues in France in the 1990s were the continuing recession and unemployment, doubts about France's role in the European Community (there was only a very small majority in September 1992 in favour of the Maastricht Treaty and uneasiness about the reunified Germany. When Chirac's new prime minister, Alain Juppé, began cutbacks to get the French economy into shape for the introduction of the euro – the new European currency – which was due to take place in 2002, there were widespread protest demonstrations and strikes (December 1995).

It was no surprise when there was a swing towards the left in the parliamentary elections of May 1997. Chirac's conservative coalition lost its majority in parliament, and the socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, became prime minister. His policies were designed to reduce the budget deficit to no more than 3 per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product),

as required by the European Community for entry into the new currency. They failed to arouse much enthusiasm; in the presidential elections of 2002, the general apathy of the voters allowed Jospin to be beaten into third place, leaving Chirac and the right-wing nationalist, Jean-Marie le Pen, to fight it out in the run-off. Chirac won easily, taking 80 per cent of the votes, but his second term as president (2002–7) was not a success. In a referendum held early in 2005, the electorate overwhelmingly rejected proposals for a new European Constitution, in spite of the government's wall-to-wall campaign in its favour. Later in the year there was a wave of riots in poorer areas of cities throughout the country protesting against the high level of youth unemployment. This was followed by a series of strikes and demonstrations against a new government policy designed to enable employers to take on young workers on a temporary basis instead of giving them job security. After two months of chaos, Chirac was forced to drop the plan. As the presidential election of 2007 approached, the Socialist Party was looking forward to victory.

However, unexpectedly, the Socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal, was heavily defeated by the Centre-Right candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy. Inexperienced in front-line politics, Royal fought a lacklustre campaign, while Sarkozy impressed the electorate with promises of greater security on the streets, tough policies on crime and immigration and a clean break from the Chirac era in order to reverse the increasingly obvious national decline. Unfortunately, from the autumn of 2008, the Sarkozy presidency was dominated by the aftermath of the great financial collapse in the USA, which plunged the whole EU into an ongoing economic crisis. The presidential election of 2012 was won by the socialist candidate, François Hollande.

(b) The German Federal Republic (West Germany)

Set up in 1949, the German Federal Republic enjoyed a remarkable recovery – an 'economic miracle' – under the conservative government of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (1949–63). It was achieved partly thanks to the Marshall Plan, which brought substantial American investment into the country. This enabled the rebuilding of German industry to accelerate and provided funds for the installation of the latest up-to-date plant and equipment. The government encouraged the ploughing back of profits into industry rather than distributing them as higher dividends or higher wages (which happened in Britain). Taxation was reduced, which meant that people had more money to spend on manufactured goods; rationing and other controls were either reduced or removed altogether. Events abroad contributed to the German recovery; for example, the war in Korea (1950–1) produced a demand for exactly the type of high-quality goods that the Germans were so good at producing. Industrial recovery was so complete that by 1960 West Germany was producing 50 per cent more steel than the united Germany in 1938, and unemployment was less than a quarter of a million. The German people themselves must take much of the credit for their determination and ingenuity that enabled their country not only to recover from the catastrophe of military defeat, but also to enjoy arguably the most successful economy in Europe. All classes shared in the prosperity; pensions and children's allowances were geared to the cost of living, and 10 million new dwellings were provided.

The new constitution encouraged the trend towards a two-party system, which meant there was a better chance of strong government. The two major parties were:

- the Christian Democrats (CDU) – Adenauer's conservative party;
- the Social Democrats (SDP) – a moderate socialist party.

There was a smaller liberal party – the Free Democratic Party (FDP). In 1979 the Green Party was founded, with a programme based on ecological and environmental issues.

Adenauer's CDU successors, Ludwig Erhard (1963–6) and Kurt Georg Kiesinger (1966–9), continued the good work, though there were some setbacks and a rise in unemployment. This caused support to swing to the SDP, who stayed in power, with FDP support, for 13 years, first under Willi Brandt (1969–74) and then under Helmut Schmidt (1974–82). After the prosperous 1970s, West Germany began to suffer increasingly from the world recession. By 1982 unemployment had shot up to 2 million; when Schmidt proposed increasing spending to stimulate the economy, the more cautious FDP withdrew support and Schmidt was forced to resign (October 1982). A new right-wing coalition of the CDU and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) was formed, with FDP support, and the CDU leader, Helmut Kohl, became Chancellor. Recovery soon came – statistics for 1985 showed a healthy economic growth rate of 2.5 per cent and a big export boom. By 1988 the boom was over and unemployment rose to 2.3 million. However, Kohl managed to hold on to power, and had the distinction of becoming the first Chancellor of the reunified Germany in October 1990.

Reunification brought enormous problems for Germany – the cost of modernizing the east and bringing its economy up to western standards placed a big strain on the country. Billions of Deutschmarks were poured in and the process of privatizing state industries was begun. Kohl had promised to revive the east without raising taxes, and to make sure that 'nobody after unification will be worse off'. Neither of these pledges proved to be possible: there were tax increases and cuts in government spending. The economy stagnated, unemployment rose and the process of revival took much longer than anybody had anticipated. After 16 years the voters at last turned against Kohl; in 1998 the SDP leader Gerhard Schröder became chancellor.

The economy remained the greatest challenge facing the new chancellor. The government failed to improve the situation significantly, and Schröder was only narrowly re-elected in 2002. In the summer of 2003 unemployment reached 4.4 million – 10.6 per cent of the registered workforce. At the end of the year, the budget deficit exceeded the 3 per cent ceiling for participation in the euro. France had the same problem. Both states were let off with a warning, but the situation did not bode well. Germany's finance minister admitted that the target of balancing the budget by 2006 could not be achieved without another 'economic miracle'.

In the elections of 2005 the CDU/CSU group won a very narrow victory, but lacking a majority in the Bundestag, had to form a coalition with its ally, the FDP, and the main opposition party, the SPD. Schröder stepped down and Angela Merkel, the CDU leader and a politician from the former East Germany, became the first woman Chancellor. There was an economic upswing in the period 2006–7, unemployment fell, and the resulting increase in tax revenues helped to absorb some of the budget deficit. And then came the great crash of 2008, which soon plunged Germany once again into a deep recession. In the elections of September 2009, the SPD suffered its worst-ever performance and was forced to drop out of the coalition. The FDP increased its vote significantly and this enabled Merkel to continue as Chancellor. Observers attributed her popularity to her unpretentious manner, her fairness and her common-sense approach. It was obvious that she could not be held responsible for the economic crisis and she seemed to be the leader most likely to restore stability. In office she had been much more moderate than in opposition, when she had taken a tough right-wing stance, criticizing, among other things, excessive welfare dependence. In fact there seemed little to choose between her and Schröder.

(c) Italy

The new Republic of Italy began with a period of prosperity and stable government under de Gasperi (1946–53), but then many of the old problems of the pre-Mussolini era

reappeared: with at least seven major parties, ranging from communists on the left to the neo-fascists on the far right, it was impossible for one party to win a majority in parliament. The two main parties were:

- the communists (PCI);
- the Christian Democrats (DC).

The Christian Democrats were the dominant party of government, but they were constantly dependent on alliances with smaller parties of the centre and left. There was a series of weak coalition governments, which failed to solve the problems of inflation and unemployment. One of the more successful politicians was the socialist Bettino Craxi, who was prime minister from 1983 to 1987; during this time both inflation and unemployment were reduced. But as Italy moved into the 1990s, the basic problems were still the same.

- There was a north–south divide: the north, with its modern, competitive industry, was relatively prosperous, while in the south, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia were backward, with a much lower standard of living and higher unemployment.
- The Mafia was still a powerful force, now heavily involved in drug dealing, and it seemed to be getting stronger in the north. Two judges who had been trying Mafia cases were assassinated (1992), and it seemed as though crime was out of control.
- Politics seemed to be riddled with corruption, with many leading politicians under suspicion. Even highly respected leaders like Craxi were shown to have been involved in corrupt dealings (1993), while another, Giulio Andreotti, seven times prime minister, was arrested and charged with working for the Mafia (1995).
- There was a huge government debt and a weak currency. In September 1992, Italy, along with Britain, was forced to withdraw from the Exchange Rate Mechanism and devalue the lira.

Politically, the situation changed radically in the early 1990s, with the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. The PCI changed its name to the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), while the DC broke up. Its main successor was the Popular Party (PPI). The centre-ground shrank and there was an increasing polarization between left and right. As the 1990s progressed, attention focused on several issues: the campaign for electoral reform (several attempts at which failed), concern at the escalating number of illegal immigrants (who, it was alleged, were being smuggled in by Mafia groups) and the drive to get the economy healthy enough to join the euro in 2002.

May 2001 saw a general election which brought to an end over six years of centre-left governments. Silvio Berlusconi, a media magnate reputed to be the richest man in Italy, was elected prime minister of a right-wing coalition. He promised to deliver, over the next five years, lower taxes, a million new jobs, higher pensions and better amenities. He was a colourful and controversial leader who was soon facing accusations of bribery and various other financial misdemeanours. There seemed to be some doubt as to whether he would be able to complete his term as prime minister, but these were dispelled when his government passed legislation which, in effect, granted him immunity from prosecution while he was in office. With a short interval during which the socialist Romano Prodi was prime minister (2006–8), he survived in office until November 2011. However, things started to go badly wrong soon after he returned to power in 2008. The economy was showing increasing signs of strain – there was hardly any growth at all and there was a huge national debt of €1.5 trillion. As the eurozone crisis deepened, Berlusconi lost his majority in parliament and resigned.

9.2 THE GROWTH OF UNITY IN WESTERN EUROPE

(a) Reasons for wanting more unity

In every country in western Europe, there were people who wanted more unity. They had different ideas about exactly what sort of unity would be best: some simply wanted the nations to co-operate more closely; others (known as 'federalists') wanted to go the whole hog and have a federal system of government like the one in the USA. The reasons behind this thinking were:

- The best way for Europe to recover from the ravages of war was for all the states to work together and help each other by pooling their resources.
- The individual states were too small and their economies too weak for them to be economically and militarily viable separately in a world now dominated by the superpowers, the USA and the USSR.
- The more the countries of western Europe worked together, the less chance there would be of war breaking out between them again. It was the best way for a speedy reconciliation between France and Germany.
- Joint action would enable western Europe more effectively to resist the spread of communism from the USSR.
- The Germans were especially keen on the idea because they thought it would help them to gain acceptance as a responsible nation more quickly than after the First World War. Then, Germany had been made to wait eight years before being allowed to join the League of Nations.
- The French thought that greater unity would enable them to influence German policies and remove long-standing worries about security.

Winston Churchill was one of the strongest advocates of a united Europe. In March 1943 he spoke of the need for a Council of Europe, and in a speech in Zurich in 1946 he suggested that France and West Germany should take the lead in setting up 'a kind of United States of Europe'.

(b) First steps in co-operation

The first steps in economic, military and political co-operation were soon taken, though the federalists were bitterly disappointed that a United States of Europe had not materialized by 1950.

1 The Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC)
This was set up officially in 1948, and was the first initiative towards economic unity. It began as a response to the American offer of Marshall Aid, when Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, took the lead in organizing 16 European nations to draw up a plan for the best use of American aid. This was known as the European Recovery Programme (ERP). The committee of 16 nations became the permanent OEEC. Its first function, successfully achieved over the next four years, was to apportion American aid among its members, after which it went on, again with great success, to encourage trade among its members by reducing restrictions. It was helped by the United Nations General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), whose function was to reduce tariffs, and by the European Payments Union (EPU): this encouraged trade by improving the system of payments between member states, so that each state could use its own currency. The OEEC was so

successful that trade between its members doubled during the first six years. When the USA and Canada joined in 1961, it became the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Later, Australia and Japan joined.

2 The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
NATO was created in 1949 as a mutual defence system in case of an attack on one of the member states. In most people's minds, the USSR was the most likely source of any attack. NATO was not just a European organization – it also included the USA and Canada. The Korean War (1950–3) caused the USA to press successfully for the integration of NATO forces under a centralized command; a Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) was established near Paris, and an American general, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was made Supreme Commander of all NATO forces. Until the end of 1955, NATO seemed to be developing impressively: the forces available for the defence of Western Europe had been increased fourfold, and it was claimed by some that NATO had deterred the USSR from attacking West Germany. However, problems soon arose: the French were not happy about the dominant American role; in 1966 President de Gaulle withdrew France from NATO, so that French forces and French nuclear policy would not be controlled by a foreigner. Compared with the communist Warsaw Pact, NATO was weak: with 60 divisions of troops in 1980, it fell far short of its target of 96 divisions, whereas the Communist bloc could boast 102 divisions and three times as many tanks as NATO.

3 The Council of Europe
Set up in 1949, this was the first attempt at some sort of political unity. Its founder members were Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, France, Eire, Italy, Norway and Sweden. By 1971 all the states of western Europe (except Spain and Portugal) had joined, and so had Turkey, Malta and Cyprus, making 18 members in all. Based at Strasbourg, it consisted of the foreign ministers of the member states, and an Assembly of representatives chosen by the parliaments of the states. It had no powers, however, since several states, including Britain, refused to join any organization which threatened their own sovereignty. It could debate pressing issues and make recommendations, and it achieved useful work sponsoring human rights agreements; but it was a grave disappointment to the federalists.

9.3 THE EARLY DAYS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Known in its early years as the European Economic Community (EEC) or the Common Market, the Community was officially set up under the terms of the Treaty of Rome (1957), signed by the six founder members – France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

(a) Stages in the evolution of the community

1 Benelux
In 1944 the governments of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, meeting in exile in London because their countries were occupied by the Germans, began to plan for when the war was over. They agreed to set up the Benelux Customs Union, in which there would be no tariffs or other customs barriers, so that trade could flow freely. The driving force behind it was Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian socialist leader who was prime minister of Belgium from 1947 to 1949; it was put into operation in 1947.

2 The Treaty of Brussels (1948)
By this treaty, Britain and France joined the three Benelux countries in pledging 'military, economic, social and cultural collaboration'. While the military collaboration eventually resulted in NATO, the next step in economic co-operation was the ECSC.

3 The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)
The ECSC was set up in 1951, and was the brainchild of Robert Schuman, who was France's Foreign Minister from 1948 to 1953. Like Spaak, he was strongly in favour of international co-operation, and he hoped that involving West Germany would improve relations between France and Germany and at the same time make European industry more efficient. Six countries joined: France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

All duties and restrictions on trade in coal, iron and steel between the six were removed, and a High Authority was created to run the community and to organize a joint programme of expansion. However, the British refused to join because they believed it would mean handing over control of their industries to an outside authority. The ECSC was such an outstanding success, even without Britain (steel production rose by almost 50 per cent during the first five years), that the six decided to extend it to include production of all goods.

4 The EEC
Again it was Spaak, now foreign minister of Belgium, who was one of the main driving forces. The agreements setting up the full EEC were signed in Rome in 1957 and they came into operation on 1 January 1958. The six countries would gradually remove all customs duties and quotas so that there would be free competition and a common market. Tariffs would be kept against non-members, but even these were reduced. The treaty also mentioned improving living and working conditions, expanding industry, encouraging the development of the world's backward areas, safeguarding peace and liberty, and working for a closer union of European peoples. Clearly something much wider than just a common market was in the minds of some of the people involved; for example, Jean Monnet, a French economist who was Chairman of the ECSC High Authority, set up an action committee to work for a United States of Europe. Like the ECSC, the EEC was soon off to a flying start; within five years it was the world's biggest exporter and biggest buyer of raw materials and was second only to the USA in steel production. Once again, however, Britain had decided not to join.

(b) The machinery of the European Community

- *The European Commission* was the body which ran the day-to-day work of the Community. Based in Brussels, it was staffed by civil servants and expert economists, who took the important policy decisions. It had strong powers so that it would be able to stand up against possible criticism and opposition from the governments of the six members, though in theory its decisions had to be approved by the Council of Ministers.
- *The Council of Ministers* consisted of government representatives from each of the member states. Their job was to exchange information about their governments' economic policies and to try to co-ordinate them and keep them running on similar lines. There was a certain amount of friction between the Council and the Commission: the Commission often seemed reluctant to listen to the advice of the Council, and it kept pouring out masses of new rules and regulations.

- *The European Parliament*, which met at Strasbourg, consisted of 198 representatives chosen by the parliaments of the member states. They could discuss issues and make recommendations, but had no control over the Commission or the Council. In 1979 a new system of choosing the representatives was introduced. Instead of being nominated by parliaments, they were to be elected directly by the people of the Community.
- *The European Court of Justice* was set up to deal with any problems that might arise out of the interpretation and operation of the Treaty of Rome. It soon became regarded as the body to which people could appeal if their government was thought to be infringing the rules of the Community.
- Also associated with the EEC was *EURATOM*, an organization in which the six nations pooled their efforts towards the development of atomic energy.

In 1967 the EEC, the ECSC and EURATOM formally merged and, dropping the word 'economic', became simply the European Community (EC).

(c) Britain holds back

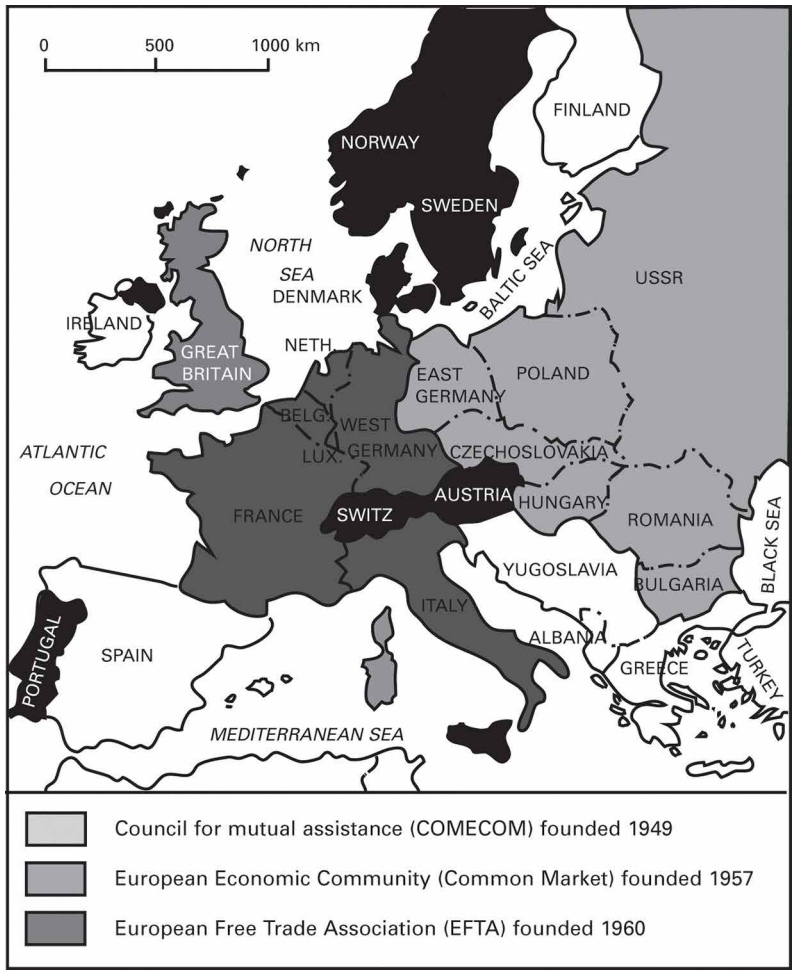
It was ironic that, although Churchill had been one of the strongest supporters of the idea of a unified Europe, when he became prime minister again in 1951, he seemed to have lost any enthusiasm he might have had for Britain's membership of it. Anthony Eden's Conservative government (1955–7) decided not to sign the 1957 Treaty of Rome. There were several reasons for the British refusal to join. The main objection was that if they joined the Community they would no longer be in complete control of their economy. The European Commission in Brussels would be able to make vital decisions affecting Britain's internal economic affairs. Although the governments of the other six states were prepared to make this sacrifice in the interests of greater overall efficiency, the British government was not. There were also fears that British membership would damage their relationship with the British Commonwealth as well as their so-called 'special relationship' with the USA, which was not shared by the other states of Europe. Most British politicians were afraid that economic unity would lead to political unity, and the loss of British sovereignty.

On the other hand, Britain and some of the other European states outside the EEC were worried about being excluded from selling their goods to EEC members because of the high duties on imports from outside the Community. Consequently, in 1959 Britain took the lead in organizing a rival group, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (see Map 9.1). Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Portugal agreed gradually to abolish tariffs between themselves. Britain was prepared to join an organization like EFTA because there was no question of common economic policies and no Commission to interfere with the internal affairs of states.

(d) Britain decides to join

Within less than four years from the signing of the Treaty of Rome, the British had changed their minds and announced that they wished to join the EEC. Their reasons were the following:

- By 1961 it was obvious that the EEC was an outstanding success – without Britain. Since 1953 French production had risen by 75 per cent while German production had increased by almost 90 per cent.



Map 9.1 **Economic unions in Europe, 1960**

- Britain's economy was much less successful – over the same period British production had risen by only about 30 per cent. The British economy seemed to be stagnating in comparison with those of the Six, and in 1960 there was a balance of payments deficit of some £270 million.
- Although EFTA had succeeded in increasing trade among its members, it was nothing like as successful as the EEC.
- The Commonwealth, in spite of its huge population, had nothing like the same purchasing power as the EEC. The British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, now thought that there need not be a clash of interest between Britain's membership of the EEC and trade with the Commonwealth. There were signs that the EEC was prepared to make special arrangements to allow Commonwealth countries and some other former European colonies to become associate members. Britain's EFTA partners might be able to join as well.

- Another argument in favour of joining was that once Britain was in, competition from other EEC members would stimulate British industry to greater effort and efficiency. Macmillan also made the point that Britain could not afford to be left out if the EEC developed into a political union.

The job of negotiating Britain's entry into the EEC was given to Edward Heath, an enthusiastic supporter of European unity. Talks opened in October 1961, and although there were some difficulties, it came as a shock when the French president, Charles de Gaulle, broke off negotiations and vetoed Britain's entry (1963).

(e) Why did the French oppose British entry into the EEC?

- De Gaulle claimed that Britain had too many economic problems and would only weaken the EEC. He also objected to any concessions being made for the Commonwealth, arguing that this would be a drain on Europe's resources. Yet the EEC had just agreed to provide aid to France's former colonies in Africa.
- The British believed that de Gaulle's real motive was his desire to continue dominating the Community. If Britain came in, she would be a serious rival.
- De Gaulle was not happy about Britain's 'American connection', believing that because of these close ties with the USA, Britain's membership would allow the USA to dominate European affairs. It would produce, he said, 'a colossal Atlantic grouping under American dependence and control'. He was annoyed that the USA had promised to supply Britain with Polaris missiles but had not made the same offer to France. He was determined to prove that France was a great power and had no need of American help. It was this friction between France and the USA that eventually led de Gaulle to withdraw France from NATO (1966).
- Finally there was the problem of French agriculture: the EEC protected its farmers with high tariffs (import duties) so that prices were much higher than in Britain. Britain's agriculture was highly efficient and subsidized to keep prices relatively low. If this continued after Britain's entry, French farmers, with their smaller and less efficient farms, would be exposed to competition from Britain and perhaps from the Commonwealth.

Meanwhile the EEC success story continued, without Britain. The Community's exports grew steadily, and the value of its exports was consistently higher than its imports. Britain, on the other hand, usually had a balance of trade deficit, and in 1964 was forced to borrow heavily from the IMF to replenish rapidly dwindling gold reserves. Once again, in 1967, de Gaulle vetoed Britain's application for membership.

(f) The Six becomes the Nine (1973)

Eventually, on 1 January 1973, Britain, along with Eire and Denmark, was able to enter the EEC and the Six became the Nine. Britain's entry was made possible because of two main factors:

- President de Gaulle had resigned in 1969 and his successor, Georges Pompidou, was more friendly towards Britain.
- Britain's Conservative prime minister, Edward Heath, negotiated with great skill and tenacity, and it was fitting that, having been a committed European for so long, he was the leader who finally took Britain into Europe.

9.4 THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY FROM 1973 TO MAASTRICHT (1991)

The main developments and problems after the Six became the Nine in 1973 were the following.

(a) The Lomé Convention (1975)

From the beginning the EC was criticized for being too inward-looking and self-centred, and for apparently showing no interest in using any of its wealth to help the world's poorer nations. This agreement, worked out in Lomé, the capital of Togo in West Africa, did something to offset criticism, though many critics argued that it was too little. It allowed goods produced in over 40 countries in Africa and the Caribbean, mostly former European colonies, to be brought into the EEC free of duties; it also promised economic aid. Other poor Third World countries were added to the list later.

(b) Direct elections to the European parliament (1979)

Although it had been in existence for over 20 years by this time, the EC was still remote from ordinary people. One reason for introducing elections was to try to arouse more interest and bring ordinary people into closer contact with the affairs of the Community.

The first elections took place in June 1979, when 410 Euro-MPs were chosen. France, Italy, West Germany and Britain were allowed 81 each, the Netherlands 25, Belgium 24, Denmark 16, Eire 15 and Luxembourg 6. The turnout varied widely from state to state. In Britain it was disappointing – less than a third of the British electorate were interested enough to bother going along to vote. In some other countries, however, notably Italy and Belgium, the turnout was over 80 per cent. Overall, in the new European parliament, the right-wing and centre parties had a comfortable majority over the left.

Elections were to be held every five years; by the time the next elections came along in 1984, Greece had joined the Community. Like Belgium, Greece was allowed 24 seats, bringing the total to 434. Overall, in the European parliament the parties of the centre and right still kept a small majority. The turnout of voters in Britain was again disappointing at only 32 per cent, whereas in Belgium it was 92 per cent and in Italy and Luxembourg it was over 80 per cent. However, in these three countries it was more or less compulsory to vote. The highest turnout in a country where voting was voluntary was 57 per cent in West Germany.

(c) The introduction of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) (1979)

This was introduced to link the currencies of the member states in order to limit the extent to which individual currencies (the Italian lira, the French, Luxembourg and Belgian franc and the German mark) could change in value against the currencies of other members. A state's currency could change in value depending on how well its domestic economy was performing: a strong economy usually meant a strong currency. It was hoped that linking the currencies would help to control inflation and lead eventually to a single currency for the whole of the EC. Initially Britain decided not to take the pound sterling into the ERM; she made the mistake of joining in October 1990, when the exchange rate was relatively high.

(d) Community membership grows

In 1981 Greece joined, followed by Portugal and Spain in 1986, bringing the total membership to 12 and the Community population to over 320 million. (These countries had not been allowed to join earlier because their political systems were undemocratic – see Chapter 15, Summary of events.) Their arrival caused new problems: they were among the poorer countries of Europe and their presence increased the influence within the Community of the less industrialized nations. From now on there would be increasing pressure from these countries for more action to help the less developed states and so improve the economic balance between rich and poor nations. Membership increased again in 1995 when Austria, Finland and Sweden, three relatively wealthy states, joined the Community.

(e) Britain and the EC budget

During the early years of their membership, many British people were disappointed that Britain did not seem to be gaining any obvious benefit from the EC. The Irish Republic (Eire), which joined at the same time, immediately enjoyed a surge of prosperity as her exports, mainly agricultural produce, found ready new markets in the Community. Britain, on the other hand, seemed to be stagnating in the 1970s, and although her exports to the Community did increase, her imports from the Community increased far more. Britain was not producing enough goods for export at the right prices. Foreign competitors could produce more cheaply and therefore captured a larger share of the market. The statistics of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 1977 are very revealing; GDP is the cash value of a country's total output from all types of production. To find out how efficient a country is, economists divide the GDP by the population of the country, which shows how much is being produced per head of the population. In relative terms, Britain was economically one of the least efficient nations in the EC, while Denmark and West Germany were top of the league.

A major crisis erupted in 1980 when Britain discovered that her budget contribution for that year was to be £1209 million, whereas West Germany's was £699 million and France only had to pay £13 million. Britain protested that her contribution was ridiculously high, given the general state of her economy. The difference was so great because of the way the budget contribution was worked out: this took into consideration the amount of import duties received by each government from goods coming into that country from outside the EC; a proportion of those duties received had to be handed over as part of the annual budget contribution. Unfortunately for the British, they imported far more goods from the outside world than any of the other members, and this was why her payment was so high. After some ruthless bargaining by Britain's prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, a compromise was reached: Britain's contribution was reduced to a total of £1346 million over the next three years.

(f) The 1986 changes

Encouraging developments occurred in 1986 when all 12 members, working closely together, negotiated some important changes which, it was hoped, would improve the EC. They included:

- a move to a completely free and common market (no restrictions of any kind on internal trade and movement of goods) by 1992;

- more EC control over health, safety, protection of the environment and protection for consumers;
- more encouragement for scientific research and technology;
- more help for backward regions;
- the introduction of majority voting on many issues in the Council of Ministers; this would prevent a measure from being vetoed just by one state which felt that its national interests might be threatened by that measure;
- more powers for the European parliament so that measures could be passed with less delay. This meant that the domestic parliaments of the member states were gradually losing some control over their own internal affairs.

Those people who favoured a federal United States of Europe were pleased by the last two points, but in some of the member states, especially Britain and Denmark, they stirred up the old controversy about national sovereignty. Mrs Thatcher upset some of the other European leaders when she spoke out against any movement towards a politically united Europe: 'a centralized federal government in Europe would be a nightmare; co-operation with the other European countries must not be at the expense of individuality, the national customs and traditions which made Europe great in the past'.

(g) The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

One of the most controversial aspects of the EC was its Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In order to help farmers and encourage them to stay in business, so that the Community could continue to produce much of its own food, it was decided to pay them subsidies (extra cash to top up their profits). This would ensure them worthwhile profits and at the same time would keep prices at reasonable levels for the consumers. This was such a good deal for the farmers that they were encouraged to produce far more than could be sold. Yet the policy was continued, until by 1980 about three-quarters of the entire EC budget was being paid out each year in subsidies to farmers. Britain, the Netherlands and West Germany pressed for a limit to be placed on subsidies, but the French government was reluctant to agree to this because it did not want to upset French farmers, who were doing very well out of the subsidies.

In 1984, maximum production quotas were introduced for the first time, but this did not solve the problem. By 1987 the stockpiling of produce had reached ludicrous proportions. There was a vast wine 'lake' and a butter 'mountain' of one and a half million tonnes – enough to supply the entire EC for a year. There was enough milk powder to last five years, and storage fees alone were costing £1 million a day. Efforts to get rid of the surplus included selling it off cheaply to the USSR, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, distributing butter free of charge to the poor within the Community, and using it to make animal feed. Some of the oldest butter was burnt in boilers.

All this helped to cause a massive budget crisis in 1987: the Community was £3 billion in the red and had debts of £10 billion. In a determined effort to solve the problem, the EC introduced a harsh programme of production curbs and a price freeze to put a general squeeze on Europe's farmers. This naturally caused an outcry among farmers, but by the end of 1988 it was having some success and the surpluses were shrinking steadily. Member states were now beginning to concentrate on preparing for 1992 when the introduction of the single European market would bring the removal of all internal trading barriers, and, some people hoped, much greater monetary integration.

(h) Greater integration: The Maastricht Treaty (1991)

A summit meeting of all the heads of the member states was held in Maastricht (the Netherlands) in December 1991, and an agreement was drawn up for 'a new stage in the process of creating an even closer union among the peoples of Europe'. Some of the points agreed were:

- more powers for the European parliament;
- greater economic and monetary union, to culminate in the adoption of a common currency (the euro) shared by all the member states, around the end of the century;
- a common foreign and security policy;
- a timetable to be drawn up of the stages by which all this would be achieved.

Britain objected very strongly to the ideas of a federal Europe and monetary union, and to a whole section of the Treaty known as *the Social Chapter*, which was a list of regulations designed to protect people at work. There were rules about:

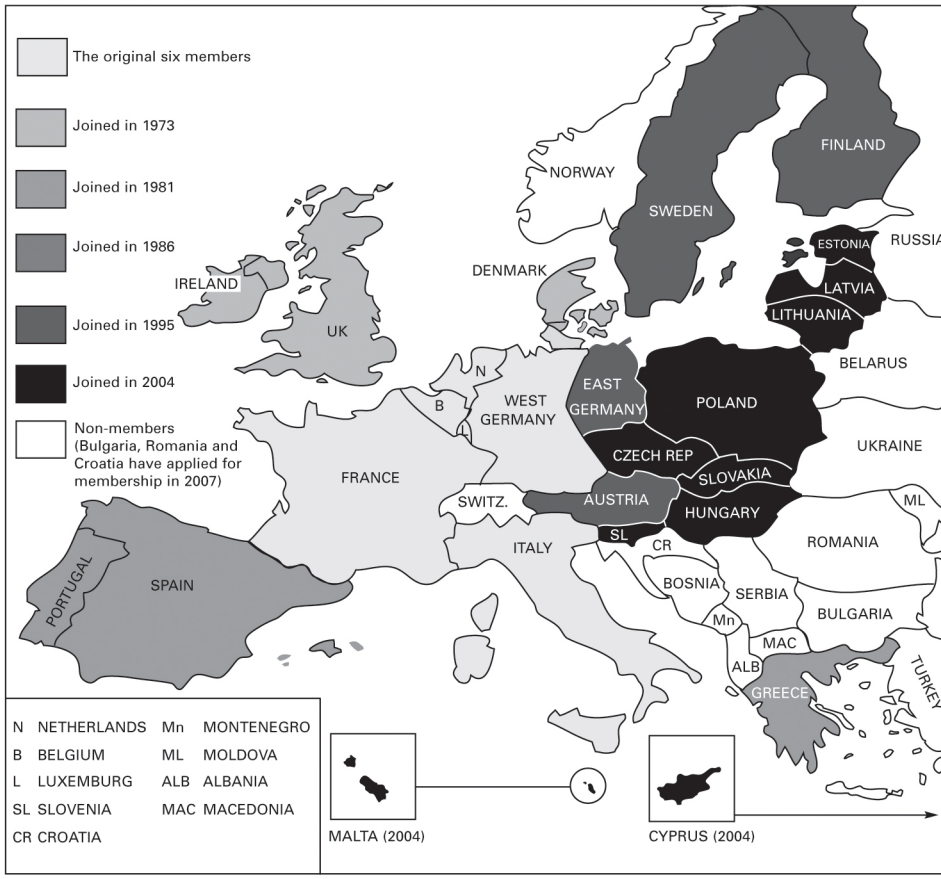
- safe and healthy working conditions;
- equality at work between men and women;
- consulting workers and keeping them informed about what was going on;
- protection of workers made redundant.

Britain argued that these measures would increase production costs and therefore cause unemployment. The other members seemed to think that proper treatment of workers was more important. In the end, because of British objections, the Social Chapter was removed from the Treaty and it was left to individual governments to decide whether or not to carry them out. The rest of the Maastricht Treaty, without the Social Chapter, had to be ratified (approved) by the national parliaments of the 12 members, and this had been achieved by October 1993.

The French, Dutch and Belgian governments supported the Treaty strongly because they thought it was the best way to make sure that the power of the reunified Germany was contained and controlled within the Community. The ordinary people of the Community were not as enthusiastic about the Treaty as their leaders. The people of Denmark at first voted against it, and it took determined campaigning by the government before it was approved by a narrow majority in a second referendum (May 1993). The Swiss people voted not to join the Community (December 1992), and so did the Norwegians; even in the French referendum the majority in favour of Maastricht was tiny. In Britain, where the government would not allow a referendum, the Conservatives were split over Europe and the Treaty was approved only by the narrowest of majorities in parliament.

By the mid-1990s, after almost 40 years of existence, the European Community (known since 1992 as the European Union) had been a great success economically and had fostered good relations between the member states, but there were vital issues to be faced:

- How much closer could economic and political co-operation become?
- The collapse of communism in the states of eastern Europe brought with it a whole new scenario. Would these states (Map 9.2) want to join the European Union, and if so, what should be the attitude of the existing members? In April 1994, Poland and Hungary formally applied for membership.



Map 9.2 **The growth of the European Community and Union**

9.5 COMMUNIST UNITY IN EASTERN EUROPE

The communist countries of eastern Europe were joined in a kind of unity under the leadership of the USSR. The main difference between the unity in eastern Europe and that in the west was that the countries of eastern Europe were forced into it by the USSR whereas the members of the EC joined voluntarily. By the end of 1948 there were nine states in the Communist bloc: the USSR itself, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia.

(a) Organization of the Communist bloc

Stalin set about making all the states into carbon copies of the USSR, with the same political, economic and educational systems, and the same Five Year Plans. All had to carry out the bulk of their trade with Russia, and their foreign policies and armed forces were controlled from Moscow.

1 The Molotov Plan
This was the first Russian-sponsored step towards an economically united Eastern bloc. The idea of the Russian foreign minister, Molotov, it was a response to the American offer of Marshall Aid. Since the Russians refused to allow any of their satellites to accept American aid, Molotov felt they had to be offered an alternative. The Plan was basically a set of trade agreements between the USSR and its satellites, negotiated during the summer of 1947; it was designed to boost the trade of eastern Europe.

2 The Communist Information Bureau (Cominform)
This was set up by the USSR at the same time as the Molotov Plan. All the communist states had to become members and its aim was political: to make sure that all the governments followed the same line as the government of the USSR in Moscow. To be communist was not enough; it had to be Russian-style communism.

3 The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON)
COMECON was set up by the USSR in 1949. The aim was to help plan the economies of the individual states. All industry was nationalized (taken over by the state), and agriculture was collectivized (organized into a system of large, state-owned farms). Later, Nikita Khrushchev (Russian leader 1956–64) tried to use COMECON to organize the Communist bloc into a single, integrated economy; he wanted East Germany and Czechoslovakia to develop as the main industrial areas, and Hungary and Romania to concentrate on agriculture. However, this provoked hostile reactions in many of the states and Khrushchev had to change his plans to allow more variations within the economies of the different countries. The Eastern bloc enjoyed some success economically, with steadily increasing production. However, their average GDP and general efficiency were below those of the EC. Albania had the doubtful distinction of being the most backward country in Europe. In the 1980s the economies of the Eastern bloc states experienced difficulties, with shortages, inflation and a fall in the standard of living.

Even so, the Communist bloc had a good record in social services; in some eastern European countries, health services were as good, if not better than those in some EC countries. For example, in Britain in 1980 there was, on average, one doctor for every 618 people; in the USSR there was one doctor for every 258 people, and in Czechoslovakia the figure was 293. Only Albania, Yugoslavia and Romania had a worse ratio than Britain's.

4 The Warsaw Pact (1955)
The Warsaw Pact was signed by the USSR and all the satellite states except Yugoslavia. They promised to defend each other against any attack from outside; the armies of the member states came under overall Russian control from Moscow. Ironically, the only time Warsaw Pact troops took part in joint action was against one of their own members – Czechoslovakia – when the USSR disapproved of Czech internal policies (1968).

(b) Tensions in the Eastern bloc

Although there were some disagreements in the EC about problems like the Common Agricultural Policy and the sovereignty of the individual states, these were not as serious as the tensions which occurred between the USSR and some of her satellite states. In the early years of the Cominform, Moscow felt it had to clamp down on any leader or movement which seemed to threaten the solidarity of the Communist bloc. Sometimes the Russians did not hesitate to use force.

1 Yugoslavia defies Moscow

Yugoslavia was the first state to stand up against Moscow. Here, the communist leader, Tito, owed much of his popularity to his successful resistance against the Nazi forces occupying Yugoslavia during the Second World War. In 1945 he was legally elected as leader of the new Yugoslav Republic and so he did not owe his position to the Russians. By 1948 he had fallen out with Stalin. He was determined to follow his own brand of communism, not Stalin's. He was against over-centralization (everything being controlled and organized from the centre by the government). He objected to Stalin's plan for the Yugoslav economy and to the constant Russian attempts to interfere in Yugoslavia's affairs. He wanted to be free to trade with the west as well as with the USSR. Stalin therefore expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform and cut off economic aid, expecting that the country would soon be ruined economically and that Tito would be forced to resign. However, Stalin had miscalculated: Tito was much too popular to be toppled by outside pressures, and so Stalin decided it would be too risky to invade Yugoslavia. Tito was able to remain in power and *he* continued to operate communism in his own way. This included full contact and trade with the west and acceptance of aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The Yugoslavs began to reverse the process of centralization: industries were denationalized, and instead of being state-owned, they became public property, managed by workers' representatives through councils and assemblies. The same applied in agriculture: the communes were the most important unit in the state. These were groups of families, each group containing between 5000 and 100 000 people. The elected Commune Assembly organized matters to do with the economy, education, health, culture and welfare. The system was a remarkable example of ordinary people playing a part in making the decisions which closely affected their own lives, both at work and in the community. It achieved much because workers had a personal stake in the success of their firm and their commune. Many Marxists thought this was the way a genuine communist state should be run, rather than the over-centralization of the USSR.

There were some weaknesses, however. One was workers' unwillingness to sack colleagues; another was a tendency to pay themselves too much. These led to over-employment and high costs and prices. Nevertheless, with its capitalist elements (like wage differentials and a free market), this was an alternative Marxist system which many developing African states, especially Tanzania, found attractive.

Khrushchev decided that his wisest course of action was to improve relations with Tito. In 1955 he visited Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, and apologized for Stalin's actions. The breach was fully healed the following year when Khrushchev gave his formal approval to Tito's successful brand of communism.

2 Stalin acts against other leaders

As the rift with Yugoslavia widened, Stalin arranged for the arrest of any communist leaders in the other states who attempted to follow independent policies. He was able to do this because most of these other leaders lacked Tito's popularity and owed their positions to Russian support in the first place. This did not make the way they were treated any less outrageous.

- *In Hungary*, the Foreign Minister László Rajk and Interior Minister János Kádár, both anti-Stalin communists, were arrested. Rajk was hanged, Kádár was put in jail and tortured, and about 200 000 people were expelled from the Party (1949).
- *In Bulgaria*, the prime minister, Traichko Koslov, was arrested and executed (1949).
- *In Czechoslovakia*, the Communist Party general secretary, Rudolf Slánský, and ten other cabinet ministers were executed (1952).
- *In Poland*, Communist Party leader and Vice-President Władysław Gomułka was imprisoned because he had spoken out in support of Tito.

- *In Albania*, communist premier Koçi Xoxe was removed and executed because he sympathized with Tito.

3 Khrushchev: 'different roads to socialism'
After Stalin's death in 1953, there were signs that the satellite states might be given more freedom. In 1956 Khrushchev made a remarkable speech at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress. The speech soon became famous, since Khrushchev used it to criticize many of Stalin's policies and seemed prepared to concede that there were 'different roads to socialism'. He healed the rift with Yugoslavia and in April 1956 he abolished the Cominform, which had been annoying Russia's partners ever since it was set up in 1947. However, events in Poland and Hungary soon showed that there were sharp limits to Khrushchev's new toleration …

(c) Crisis in Poland

There was a general strike and a massive anti-government and anti-Soviet demonstration in Posen (Poznán) in June 1956. The banners demanded 'bread and freedom' and the workers were protesting against poor living standards, wage reductions and high taxes. Although they were dispersed by Polish troops, tension remained high throughout the summer. In October, Russian tanks surrounded Warsaw, the Polish capital, though as yet they took no action. In the end the Russians decided to compromise: Gomułka, who had earlier been imprisoned on Stalin's orders, was allowed to be reappointed as First Secretary of the Communist Party. It was accepted that Polish communism could develop in its own way provided that the Poles went along with Russia in foreign affairs. The Russians obviously felt that Gomułka could be trusted not to stray too far. Relations between the two states continued reasonably smoothly, although the Polish version of communism would definitely not have been acceptable to Stalin. For example, the collectivization of agriculture was introduced very slowly, and probably only about 10 per cent of farmland was ever collectivized. Poland also traded with countries outside the communist bloc. Gomułka remained in power until he resigned in 1970.

(d) The Hungarian Revolution (1956)

The situation in Hungary ended very differently from the one in Poland. After Stalin's death (1953), the pro-Stalin leader, Rákosi, was replaced by a more moderate communist, Imry Nagy. However, Rákosi continued to interfere and overthrew Nagy (1955). From then on resentment steadily built up against the government until it exploded in a full-scale rising (October 1956). Its causes were many:

- There was hatred of Rákosi's brutal regime, under which at least 2000 people had been executed and 200 000 others had been put in prisons and concentration camps.
- Living standards of ordinary people were getting worse while hated Communist Party leaders were living comfortable lives.
- There was intense anti-Russian feeling.
- Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Congress and Gomułka's return to power in Poland encouraged the Hungarians to resist their government.

Rákosi was overthrown, Nagy became prime minister, and the popular Roman Catholic Cardinal Mindszenty, who had been in prison for six years for anti-communist views, was released.

Until this point the Russians seemed prepared to compromise as they had done in Poland. But then Nagy went too far: he announced plans for a government including members of other political parties and talked of withdrawing Hungary from the Warsaw Pact. The Russians would not allow this: if Nagy had his way, Hungary might become a non-communist state and cease to be an ally of the USSR. It would encourage people in other eastern bloc states to do the same. Russian tanks moved in, surrounded Budapest, the Hungarian capital, and opened fire (3 November). The Hungarians resisted bravely and fighting lasted two weeks before the Russians brought the country under control. About 20 000 people were killed and another 20 000 imprisoned. Nagy was executed, although he had been promised a safe-conduct, and perhaps as many as 200 000 fled the country for the West. The Russians installed János Kádár as the new Hungarian leader. Although he had once been imprisoned on Stalin's orders, he was now a reliable ally of Moscow, and he stayed in power until 1988.

(e) The crisis in Czechoslovakia (1968)

After their military intervention in Hungary, the Russians did not interfere so directly anywhere until 1968, when they felt that the Czechs were straying too far from the accepted communist line. In the meantime they had allowed considerable variations within the states, and sometimes did not press unpopular plans. For example, Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania continued with their own versions of communism. In 1962, when Khrushchev suggested that each satellite state should concentrate on producing one particular product, the Hungarians, Romanians and Poles, who wanted to develop an all-round economy, protested strongly and the idea was quietly dropped. Provided no policies were introduced which threatened Communist Party domination, the Russians seemed reluctant to interfere. In the mid-1960s it was the turn of the Czechs to see how far they could go before the Russians called a halt. Their government was run by a pro-Moscow communist, Antonin Novotny, and opposition gradually escalated for several reasons.

- The Czechs were industrially and culturally the most advanced of the Eastern bloc peoples, and they objected to the over-centralized Russian control of their economy. It seemed senseless, for example, that they should have to put up with poor quality iron ore from Siberia when they could have been using high-grade ore from Sweden.
- Between 1918 and 1938, when Czechoslovakia was an independent state, the Czechs had enjoyed great freedom, but now they resented all the restrictions on personal liberty; newspapers, books and magazines were heavily censored (that is, they could only print what the government allowed), and there was no freedom of speech; anybody who criticized the government could be arrested.
- When people tried to hold protest marches, they were dispersed by the police, whose methods were violent and brutal.

Matters came to a head in January 1968 when Novotny was forced to resign and Alexander Dubček became First Secretary of the Communist Party. He and his supporters had a completely new programme.

- The Communist Party would no longer dictate policy.
- Industry would be decentralized; this means that factories would be run by works councils instead of being controlled from the capital by party officials.
- Instead of farms being collectivized (owned and run by the state), they would become independent co-operatives.
- There should be wider powers for trade unions.

- More trade would take place with the west and there would be freedom to travel abroad; the frontier with West Germany, which had been closed since 1948, was immediately thrown open.
- There was to be freedom of speech and freedom for the press; criticism of the government was encouraged. Dubček believed that although the country would remain communist, the government should earn the right to be in power by responding to people's wishes. He called it 'socialism with a human face'.
- He was very careful to assure the Russians that Czechoslovakia would stay in the Warsaw Pact and remain a reliable ally.

During the spring and summer of 1968 this programme was carried into operation. The Russians became more and more worried by it, and in August there was a massive invasion of Czechoslovakia by Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Hungarian and East German troops. The Czech government decided not to resist so as to avoid the sort of bloodshed which had occurred in Hungary in 1956. The Czech people tried to resist passively for a time by going on strike and holding peaceful anti-Russian demonstrations, but in the end the government was forced to abandon its new programme. The following year Dubček was replaced by Gustáv Husák, a communist leader who did as Moscow told him and so managed to stay in power until 1987.

The Russians intervened because Dubček was going to allow freedom of speech and freedom for the press, which was bound to lead to similar demands throughout the Soviet bloc. The Russians dared not risk this happening in case it led to mass protests and uprisings in the USSR itself. There was pressure for Russian action from some other communist leaders, especially those in East Germany, who were afraid that protests might spread over the frontier into Germany from Czechoslovakia. Soon afterwards, Leonid Brezhnev, the Russian leader who had ordered the invasion, announced what he called *the Brezhnev Doctrine*: this said that intervention in the internal affairs of any communist country was justified if socialism (by which he meant communism) was threatened. However, there had been some disturbing signs for the Soviet leadership: the Romanian government had been impressed by Dubček's policies and was looking forward to closer relations with Prague; consequently they refused to take part in the invasion. Yugoslavia and China also condemned the invasion.

(f) The communist bloc moves towards collapse

Although the states of eastern Europe seemed on the surface to be firmly under Russian control, resentment against Moscow's hard line simmered on, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

- In Poland, Gomułka was forced to resign after a series of riots (1970), and his replacement, Gierek, also resigned (1980) following industrial unrest, food shortages and strikes in the port of Gdansk and other cities. The new government was forced to allow the formation of an independent trade union movement, known as Solidarity. The Russians moved troops up to the Polish frontier, but no invasion took place this time, perhaps because they had just sent troops into Afghanistan and were unwilling to risk another military involvement so soon.
- The Helsinki Agreements (1975) caused problems in the communist bloc. These agreements were signed at a conference in Helsinki (the capital of Finland) by every nation in Europe (except Albania and Andorra) and also by Canada, the USA and Cyprus. They promised to work for increased co-operation in economic affairs and peacekeeping, and to protect human rights. Before very long, people in the USSR

and other communist states were accusing their governments of failing to allow basic human rights.

- In Czechoslovakia a human rights group calling itself Charter 77 was formed (in 1977), and during the 1980s it became more outspoken in its criticisms of the Husák government. In December 1986 a spokesman for the group said: 'while Husák lives, political stagnation will reign supreme; once he has gone, the party will explode'.
- By this time all the communist states were suffering serious economic problems, much worse than those in the EC. Although not many people in the west realized it at the time, communism and the Communist bloc were fast approaching collapse and disintegration.

9.6 WHY AND HOW DID COMMUNISM COLLAPSE IN EASTERN EUROPE?

In the short period between August 1988 and December 1991, communism in eastern Europe was swept away. Poland was the first to reject communism, closely followed by Hungary and East Germany and the rest, until by the end of 1991 even Russia had ceased to be communist, after 74 years. Why did this dramatic collapse take place?

(a) Economic failure

Communism as it existed in eastern Europe was a failure economically. It simply did not produce the standard of living which should have been possible, given the vast resources available. The economic systems were inefficient, over-centralized and subject to too many restrictions; all the states, for example, were expected to do most of their trading within the Communist bloc. By the mid-1980s there were problems everywhere. According to Misha Glenny, a BBC correspondent in eastern Europe,

> the Communist Party leaderships refused to admit that the working class lived in more squalid conditions, breathing in more damaged air and drinking more toxic water, than `western working classes … the communist record on health, education, housing, and a range of other social services has been atrocious.

Increasing contact with the west in the 1980s showed people how backward the east was in comparison with the west, and suggested that their living standards were falling even further. It showed also that it must be their own leaders and the communist system that were the cause of all their problems.

(b) Mikhail Gorbachev

Mikhail Gorbachev, who became leader of the USSR in March 1985, started the process which led to the collapse of the Soviet Empire. He recognized the failings of the system and he admitted that it was 'an absurd situation' that the USSR, the world's biggest producer of steel, fuel and energy, should be suffering shortages because of waste and inefficience. He hoped to save communism by revitalizing and modernizing it. He introduced new policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (economic and social reform). Criticism of the system was encouraged in the drive for improvement, provided nobody criticized the Communist Party. He also helped to engineer the overthrow of the old-fashioned,

hardline communist leaders in Czechoslovakia, and he was probably involved in plotting the overthrow of the East German, Romanian and Bulgarian leaders. His hope was that more progressive leaders would increase the chances of saving communism in Russia's satellite states.

Unfortunately for Gorbachev, once the process of reform began, it proved impossible to control it. The most dangerous time for any repressive regime is when it begins to try and reform itself by making concessions. These are never enough to satisfy the critics, and in Russia, criticism inevitably turned against the Communist Party itself and demanded more. Public opinion even turned against Gorbachev because many people felt he was not moving fast enough.

The same happened in the satellite states: the communist leaderships found it difficult to adapt to the new situation of having a leader in Moscow who was more progressive than they were. The critics became more daring as they realized that Gorbachev would not send Soviet troops in to fire on them. With no help to be expected from Moscow, when it came to the crisis, none of the communist governments was prepared to use sufficient force against the demonstrators (except in Romania). When they came, the rebellions were too widespread, and it would have needed a huge commitment of tanks and troops to hold down the whole of eastern Europe simultaneously. Having only just succeeded in withdrawing from Afghanistan, Gorbachev had no desire for an even greater involvement. In the end it was a triumph of 'people power': demonstrators deliberately defied the threat of violence in such huge numbers that troops would have had to shoot a large proportion of the population in the big cities to keep control.

(c) Poland leads the way

General Jaruzelski, who became leader in 1981, was prepared to take a tough line: when Solidarity (the new trade union movement) demanded a referendum to demonstrate the strength of its support, Jaruzelski declared martial law (that is, the army took over control), banned Solidarity and arrested thousands of activists. The army obeyed his orders because everybody was still afraid of Russian military intervention. By July 1983 the government was in firm control: Jaruzelski felt it safe to lift martial law and Solidarity members were gradually released. But the underlying problem was still there: all attempts to improve the economy failed. In 1988 when Jaruzelski tried to economize by cutting government subsidies, protest strikes broke out because the changes sent food prices up. This time Jaruzelski decided not to risk using force; he knew that there would be no backing from Moscow, and realized that he needed opposition support to deal with the economic crisis. Talks opened in February 1989 between the communist government, Solidarity and other opposition groups (the Roman Catholic Church had been loud in its criticisms). By April 1989, sensational changes in the constitution had been agreed:

- Solidarity was allowed to become a political party;
- there were to be two houses of parliament, a lower house and a senate;
- in the lower house, 65 per cent of the seats had to be communist;
- the senate was to be freely elected – no guaranteed communist seats;
- the two houses voting together would elect a president, who would then choose a prime minister.

In the elections of June 1989, Solidarity won 92 out of the 100 seats in the senate and 160 out of the 161 seats which they could fight in the lower house. A compromise deal was worked out when it came to forming a government: Jaruzelski was narrowly elected president, thanks to all the guaranteed communist seats in the lower house, but he chose

a Solidarity supporter, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, as prime minister – the first non-communist leader in the eastern bloc (August). Mazowiecki chose a mixed government of communists and Solidarity supporters.

The new constitution proved to be only transitional. After the collapse of communism in the other east European states, further changes in Poland removed the guaranteed communist seats, and in the elections of December 1990, Lech Wałęsa, the Solidarity leader, was elected president. The peaceful revolution in Poland was complete.

(d) The peaceful revolution spreads to Hungary

Once the Poles had thrown off communism without interference from the USSR, it was only a matter of time before the rest of eastern Europe tried to follow suit. In Hungary even Kádár himself admitted in 1985 that living standards had fallen over the previous five years, and he blamed poor management, poor organization and outdated machinery and equipment in the state sector of industry. He announced new measures of decentralization – company councils and elected works managers. By 1987 there was conflict in the Communist Party between those who wanted more reform and those who wanted a return to strict central control. This reached a climax in May 1988 when, amid dramatic scenes at the party conference, Kádár and eight of his supporters were voted off the Politburo, leaving the progressives in control.

But as in the USSR, progress was not drastic enough for many people. Two large opposition parties became increasingly active. These were the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats, and the Democratic Forum, which stood for the interests of farmers and peasants. The Hungarian communist leadership, following the example of the Poles, decided to go peacefully. Free elections were held in March 1990, and in spite of a change of name to the Hungarian Socialist Party, the communists suffered a crushing defeat. The election was won by the Democratic Forum, whose leader, József Antall, became prime minister.

(e) Germany reunited

In East Germany, Erich Honecker, who had been communist leader since 1971, refused all reform and intended to stand firm, along with Czechoslovakia, Romania and the rest, to keep communism in place. However, Honecker was soon overtaken by events:

- Gorbachev, desperate to get financial help for the USSR from West Germany, paid a visit to Chancellor Kohl in Bonn, and promised to help bring an end to the divided Europe, in return for German economic aid. In effect he was secretly promising freedom for East Germany (June 1989).
- During August and September 1989, thousands of East Germans began to escape to the west via Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, when Hungary opened its frontier with Austria.
- The Protestant Church in East Germany became the focus of an opposition party called New Forum, which campaigned to bring an end to the repressive and atheistic communist regime. In October 1989, there was a wave of demonstrations all over East Germany demanding freedom and an end to communism.

Honecker wanted to order the army to open fire on the demonstrators, but other leading communists were not prepared to cause widespread bloodshed. They dropped Honecker, and his successor Egon Krenz made concessions. The Berlin Wall was breached (9 November 1989) and free elections were promised.

When the great powers began to drop hints that they would not stand in the way of a reunited Germany, the West German political parties moved into the East. Chancellor Kohl staged an election tour, and the East German version of his party (CDU) won an overwhelming victory (March 1990). The East German CDU leader, Lothar de Maizière, became prime minister. He was hoping for gradual moves towards reunification, but again the pressure of 'people power' carried all before it. Nearly everybody in East Germany seemed to want immediate union.

The USSR and the USA agreed that reunification could take place; Gorbachev promised that all Russian troops would be withdrawn from East Germany by 1994. France and Britain, who were less happy about German reunification, felt bound to go along with the flow. Germany was formally reunited at midnight on 3 October 1990. In elections for the whole of Germany (December 1990) the conservative CDU/CSU alliance, together with their liberal FDP supporters, won a comfortable majority over the socialist SDP. The communists (renamed the Party of Democratic Socialism – PDS) won only 17 of the 662 seats in the Bundestag (lower house of parliament). Helmut Kohl became the first Chancellor of all Germany since the Second World War.

(f) Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia had one of the most successful economies of eastern Europe. She traded extensively with the west and her industry and commerce remained buoyant throughout the 1970s. But during the early 1980s the economy ran into trouble, mainly because there had been very little attempt to modernize industry. Husák, who had been in power since 1968, resigned (1987), but his successor, Miloš Jakeš, did not have a reputation as a reformer. Then things changed suddenly in a matter of days, in what became known as the Velvet Revolution. On 17 November 1989 there was a huge demonstration in Prague, at which many people were injured by police brutality. Charter 77, now led by the famous playwright Václav Havel, organized further opposition, and after Alexander Dubček had spoken at a public rally for the first time since 1968, a national strike was declared. This was enough to topple the communist regime: Jakes resigned and Havel was elected president (29 December 1989).

(g) The rest of eastern Europe

The end of communism in the remaining states of eastern Europe was less clear-cut.

1 Romania

In Romania the communist regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu (leader since 1965) was one of the most brutal and repressive anywhere in the world. His secret police, the Securitate, were responsible for many deaths. When the revolution came, it was short and bloody: it began in Timisoara, a town in western Romania, with a demonstration in support of a popular priest who was being harassed by the Securitate. This was brutally put down and many people were killed (17 December 1989). This caused outrage throughout the country, and when, four days later, Ceauşescu and his wife appeared on the balcony of Communist Party headquarters in Bucharest to address a massed rally, they were greeted with boos and shouts of 'murderers of Timisoara'. Television coverage was abruptly halted and Ceauşescu abandoned his speech. It seemed as though the entire population of Bucharest now streamed out onto the streets. At first the army fired on the crowds and many were killed and wounded. The following day the crowds came out again; but by now the army was refusing to continue the killing, and the Ceauşescu had lost control. They were arrested, tried by a military tribunal and shot (25 December 1989).

The hated Ceauşescu had gone, but many elements of communism remained in Romania. The country had never had democratic government, and opposition had been so ruthlessly crushed that there was no equivalent of the Polish Solidarity and Czech Charter 77. When a committee calling itself the National Salvation Front (NSF) was formed, it was full of former communists, though admittedly they were communists who wanted reform. Ion Iliescu, who had been a member of Ceauşescu's government until 1984, was chosen as president. He won the presidential election of May 1990, and the NSF won the elections for a new parliament. They strongly denied that the new government was really a communist one under a different name.

2 Bulgaria
In Bulgaria the communist leader Todor Zhivkov had been in power since 1954. He had stubbornly refused all reforms, even when pressurized by Gorbachev. The progressive communists decided to get rid of him. The Politburo voted to remove him (December 1989) and in June 1990 free elections were held. The communists, now calling themselves the Bulgarian Socialist Party, won a comfortable victory over the main opposition party, the Union of Democratic Forces, probably because their propaganda machine told people that the introduction of capitalism would bring economic disaster.

3 Albania
Albania had been communist since 1945 when the communist resistance movement seized power and set up a republic; so, as with Yugoslavia, the Russians were not responsible for the introduction of communism. Since 1946 until his death in 1985 the leader had been Enver Hoxha, who was a great admirer of Stalin and copied his system faithfully. Under its new leader, Ramiz Alia, Albania was still the poorest and most backward country in Europe. During the winter of 1991 many young Albanians tried to escape from their poverty by crossing the Adriatic Sea to Italy, but most of them were sent back. By this time student demonstrations were breaking out, and statues of Hoxha and Lenin were overturned. Eventually the communist leadership bowed to the inevitable and allowed free elections. In 1992 the first non-communist president, Sali Berisha, was elected.

4 Yugoslavia
The most tragic events took place in Yugoslavia, where the end of communism led to civil war and the break-up of the country.

(h) Eastern Europe after communism

The states of eastern Europe faced broadly similar problems: how to change from a planned or 'command' economy to a free economy where 'market forces' ruled. Heavy industry, which in theory should have been privatized, was mostly old-fashioned and uncompetitive; it had now lost its guaranteed markets within the communist bloc, and so nobody wanted to buy shares in it. Although shops were better stocked than before, prices of consumer goods soared and very few people could afford to buy them. The standard of living was even lower than under the final years of communism, and very little help was forthcoming from the west. Many people had expected a miraculous improvement, and, not making allowances for the seriousness of the problems, they soon grew disillusioned with their new governments.

- The East Germans were the most fortunate, having the wealth of the former West Germany to help them. But there were tensions even here: many West Germans resented the vast amounts of 'their' money being poured into the East, and they had

to pay higher taxes and suffer higher interest rates. The easterners resented the large numbers of westerners who now moved in and took the best jobs.

- In Poland, the first four years of non-communist rule were hard for ordinary people as the government pushed ahead with its reorganization of the economy. By 1994 there were clear signs of recovery, but many people were bitterly disappointed with their new democratic government. In the presidential election of December 1995, Lech Wałęsa was defeated by a former Communist Party member, Aleksander Kwaśniewski.
- In Czechoslovakia there were problems of a different kind: Slovakia, the eastern half of the country, demanded independence, and for a time civil war seemed a strong possibility. Fortunately a peaceful settlement was worked out and the country split into two – the Czech Republic and Slovakia (1992).
- Predictably, the slowest economic progress was made in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, where the first half of the 1990s was beset by falling output and inflation.

9.7 CIVIL WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia was formed after the First World War, and consisted of the pre-First World War state of Serbia, plus territory gained by Serbia from Turkey in 1913 (containing many Muslims), and territory taken from the defeated Habsburg Empire. It included people of many different nationalities, and the state was organized on federal lines. It consisted of six republics – Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia. There were also two provinces – Vojvodina and Kosovo – which were associated with Serbia. Under communism and the leadership of Tito, the nationalist feelings of the different peoples were kept strictly under control, and people were encouraged to think of themselves primarily as Yugoslavs rather than as Serbs or Croats. The different nationalities lived peacefully together, and had apparently succeeded in putting behind them memories of the atrocities committed during the Second World War. One such atrocity was when Croat and Muslim supporters of the fascist regime set up by the Italians to rule Croatia and Bosnia during the war were responsible for the murder of some 700 000 Serbs.

However, there was still a Croat nationalist movement, and some Croat nationalist leaders, such as Franjo Tudjman, were given spells in jail. Tito (who died in 1980) had left careful plans for the country to be ruled by a collective presidency after his death. This would consist of one representative from each of the six republics and one from each of the two provinces; a different president of this council would be elected each year.

(a) Things begin to go wrong

Although the collective leadership seemed to work well at first, in the mid-1980s things began to go wrong.

- The economy was in trouble, with inflation running at 90 per cent in 1986 and unemployment standing at over a million – 13 per cent of the working population. There were differences between areas: for example, Slovenia was reasonably prosperous while parts of Serbia were poverty-stricken.
- Slobodan Miloševič, who became president of Serbia in 1988, bears much of the responsibility for the tragedy that followed. He deliberately stirred up Serbian nationalist feelings to increase his own popularity, using the situation in Kosovo.

He claimed that the Serbian minority in Kosovo were being terrorized by the Albanian majority, though there was no definite evidence of this. The Serbian government's hardline treatment of the Albanians led to protest demonstrations and the first outbreaks of violence. Miloševič remained in power after the first free elections in Serbia in 1990, having successfully convinced the voters that he was now a nationalist and not a communist. He wanted to preserve the united federal state of Yugoslavia, but intended that Serbia should be the dominant republic.

- By the end of 1990 free elections had also been held in the other republics, and new non-communist governments had taken over. They resented Serbia's attitude, none more so than Franjo Tudjman, former communist and now leader of the right-wing Croatian Democratic Union and president of Croatia. He did all he could to stir up Croatian nationalism and wanted an independent state of Croatia.
- Slovenia also wanted to become independent, and so the future looked bleak for the united Yugoslavia. Only Miloševič opposed the break-up of the state, but he wanted it kept on Serbian terms and refused to make any concessions to the other nationalities. He refused to accept a Croat as president of Yugoslavia (1991) and used Yugoslav federal cash to help the Serb economy.
- The situation was complicated because each republic had ethnic minorities: there were about 600 000 Serbs living in Croatia – about 15 per cent of the population – and about 1.3 million Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina – roughly a third of the population. Tudjman would give no guarantees to the Serbs of Croatia, and this gave Serbia the excuse to announce that she would defend all Serbs forced to live under Croatian rule. War was not inevitable: with statesmanlike leaders prepared to make sensible concessions, peaceful solutions could have been found. But clearly, if Yugoslavia broke up, with men like Miloševič and Tudjman in power, there was little chance of a peaceful future.

(b) The move to war: The Serb–Croat War

Crisis-point was reached in June 1991 when Slovenia and Croatia declared themselves independent, against the wishes of Serbia. Fighting seemed likely between troops of the Yugoslav federal army (mainly Serbian) stationed in those countries, and the new Croatian and Slovenian militia armies, which had just been formed. Civil war was avoided in Slovenia mainly because there were very few Serbs living there. The EC was able to act as mediator, and secured the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Slovenia.

However, it was a different story in Croatia, with its large Serbian minority. Serbian troops invaded the eastern area of Croatia (eastern Slavonia) where many Serbs lived, and other towns and cities, including Dubrovnik on the Dalmatian coast, were shelled. By the end of August 1991 they had captured about one-third of the country. Only then, having captured all the territory he wanted, did Miloševič agree to a ceasefire. A UN force of 13 000 troops – UNPROFOR – was sent to police the ceasefire (February 1992). By this time the international community had recognized the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

(c) The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Just as hostilities between Croatia and Serbia were dying down, an even more bloody struggle was about to break out in Bosnia, which contained a mixed population – 44 per cent Muslim, 33 per cent Serb and 17 per cent Croat. Bosnia declared itself independent

under the presidency of the Muslim Alija Izetbegovič (March 1992). The EC recognized its independence, making the same mistake as it had done with Croatia – it failed to make sure that the new government guaranteed fair treatment for its minorities. The Bosnian Serbs rejected the new constitution and objected to a Muslim president. Fighting soon broke out between Bosnian Serbs, who received help and encouragement from Serbia, and Bosnian Muslims. The Serbs hoped that a large strip of land in the east of Bosnia, which bordered onto Serbia, could break away from the Muslim-dominated Bosnia and become part of Serbia. At the same time Croatia attacked and occupied areas in the north of Bosnia where most of the Bosnian Croats lived.

Atrocities were committed by all sides, but it seemed that the Bosnian Serbs were the most guilty. They carried out 'ethnic cleansing', which meant driving out the Muslim civilian population from Serb-majority areas, putting them into camps, and in some cases murdering all the men. Such barbarism had not been seen in Europe since the Nazi treatment of the Jews during the Second World War. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, was besieged and shelled by the Serbs, and throughout the country there was chaos: two million refugees had been driven out of their homes by 'ethnic cleansing' and not enough food and medical supplies were available.

The UN force, UNPROFOR, did its best to distribute aid, but its job was very difficult because it had no supporting artillery or aircraft. Later the UN tried to protect the Muslims by declaring Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, three mainly Muslim towns in the Serb-majority region, as 'safe areas'; but not enough troops were provided to defend them if the Serbs decided to attack. The EC was reluctant to send any troops and the Americans felt that Europe should be able to sort out its own problems. However, they did all agree to put economic sanctions on Serbia to force Miloševič to stop helping the Bosnian Serbs. The war dragged on into 1995; there were endless talks, threats of NATO action and attempts to get a ceasefire, but no progress could be made.

During 1995 crucial changes took place which enabled a peace agreement to be signed in November. Serb behaviour eventually proved too much for the international community:

- Serb forces again bombarded Sarajevo, killing a number of people, after they had promised to withdraw their heavy weapons (May).
- Serbs seized UN peacekeepers as hostages to deter NATO air strikes.
- Serbs attacked and captured Srebrenica and Zepa, two of the UN 'safe areas', and at Srebrenica they committed perhaps the ultimate act of barbarism, killing about 8000 Muslims in a terrible final burst of 'ethnic cleansing' (July).

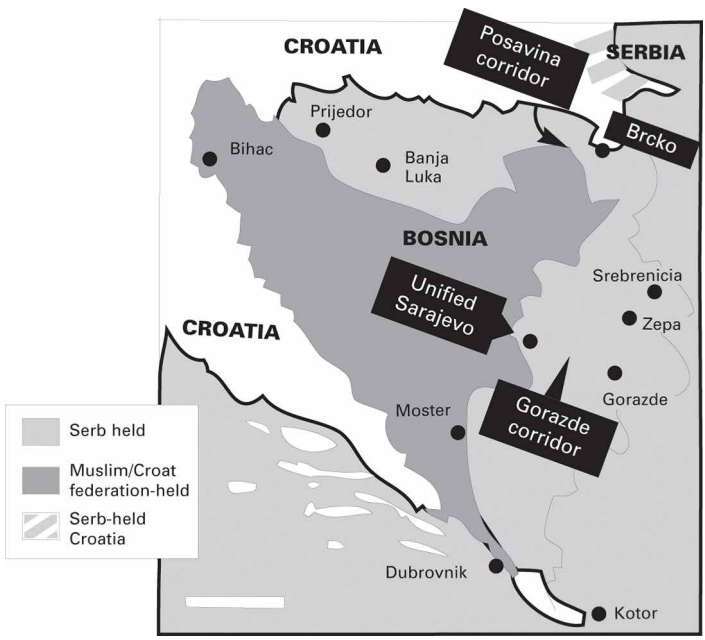
After this, *things moved more quickly*:

- The Croats and Muslims (who had signed a ceasefire in 1994) agreed to fight together against the Serbs. The areas of western Slavonia (May) and the Krajina (August) were recaptured from the Serbs.
- At a conference in London attended by the Americans, it was agreed to use NATO air strikes and to deploy a 'rapid reaction force' against the Bosnian Serbs if they continued their aggression.
- The Bosnian Serbs ignored this and continued to shell Sarajevo; 27 people were killed by a single mortar shell on 28 August. This was followed by a massive NATO bombing of Bosnian Serb positions, which continued until they agreed to move their weapons away from Sarajevo. More UN troops were sent, though in fact the UN position was weakened because NATO was now running the operation. By this time the Bosnian Serb leaders, Radovan Karadžič and General Mladič, had been indicted by the European Court for war crimes.

- President Miloševič of Serbia had now had enough of the war and wanted to get the economic sanctions on his country lifted. With the Bosnian Serb leaders discredited in international eyes as war criminals, he was able to represent the Serbs at the conference table.
- With the Americans now taking the lead, a ceasefire was arranged, and Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin agreed to co-operate on peace arrangements. A peace conference met in the USA at Dayton (Ohio) in November and a treaty was formally signed in Paris (December 1995):

    - Bosnia was to remain one state with a single elected parliament and president, and a unified Sarajevo as its capital.
    - The state would consist of two sections: the Bosnian Muslim/Croat federation and the Bosnian Serb republic.
    - Gorazde, the surviving 'safe area', was to remain in Muslim hands, linked to Sarajevo by a corridor through Serb territory.
    - All indicted war criminals were banned from public life.
    - All Bosnian refugees, over two million of them, had the right to return, and there was to be freedom of movement throughout the new state.
    - 60 000 NATO troops were to police the settlement.
    - It was understood that the UN would lift the economic sanctions on Serbia.

There was general relief at the peace, though there were no real winners, and the settlement was full of problems. Only time would tell whether it was possible to maintain the new state (Map 9.3) or whether the Bosnian Serb republic would eventually try to break away and join Serbia.



Map 9.3 **The Bosnian Peace Settlement**

(d) Conflict in Kosovo

There was still the problem of Kosovo, where the Albanian majority bitterly resented Miloševič's hardline policies and the loss of much of their local provincial autonomy. Non-violent protests began as early as 1989, led by Ibrahim Rugova. The sensational events in Bosnia diverted attention away from the Kosovo situation, which was largely ignored during the peace negotiations in the USA in 1995. Since peaceful protest made no impression on Miloševič, more radical Albanian elements came to the forefront with the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). By 1998 the situation had reached the proportions of civil war, as the Serb government security forces tried to suppress the KLA. In the spring of 1999 Serb forces unleashed a full-scale offensive, committing atrocities against the Albanians. These were widely reported abroad and the world's attention at last focused on Kosovo.

When peace negotiations broke down, the international community decided that something must be done to protect the Albanians of Kosovo. NATO forces carried out controversial bombing attacks against Serbia, hoping to force Miloševič to give way. However, this only made him more determined: he ordered a campaign of ethnic cleansing which drove hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo and into the neighbouring states of Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. NATO air strikes continued, and by June 1999, with his country's economy in ruins, Miloševič accepted a peace agreement worked out by Russia and Finland. He was forced to withdraw all Serb troops from Kosovo; many of the Serb civilian population, afraid of Albanian reprisals, went with them. Most of the Albanian refugees were then able to return to Kosovo. A UN and NATO force of over 40 000 arrived to keep the peace, while UNMIK (UN Mission to Kosovo) was to supervise the administration of the country until its own government was capable of taking over.

At the end of 2003 there were still 20 000 peacekeeping troops there, and the Kosovars were becoming impatient, complaining of poverty, unemployment, and corruption among the members of UNMIK.

(e) The downfall of Miloševič

By 1998, Miloševič had served two terms as president of Serbia, and the constitution prevented him from standing for a third term. However, he managed to hold on to power by getting the Yugoslav federal parliament to appoint him president of Yugoslavia in 1997 (though Yugoslavia by then consisted only of Serbia and Montenegro). In May 1999 he was indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (at the Hague in the Netherlands), on the grounds that as president of Yugoslavia, he was responsible for crimes against international law committed by federal Yugoslav troops in Kosovo.

Public opinion gradually turned against Miloševič during 2000, because of economic difficulties, food and fuel shortages and inflation. The presidential election of September 2000 was won by his chief opponent, Vlojislav Koštunica, but a constitutional court declared the result null and void. Massive anti-Miloševič demonstrations took place in the capital, Belgrade. When crowds stormed the federal parliament and took control of the TV stations, Miloševič conceded defeat and Kostunica became president. In 2001, Miloševič was arrested and handed over to the International Tribunal in The Hague to face the war crimes charges. His trial opened in July 2001 and he chose to conduct his own defence. No verdict had been reached when he died in March 2006.

However, the new government was soon struggling to cope with Miloševič's legacy: an empty treasury, an economy ruined by years of international sanctions, rampant inflation

and a fuel crisis. The standard of living fell dramatically for most people. The parties which had united to defeat Miloševič soon fell out. In the elections at the end of 2003 the extreme nationalist Serbian Radicals emerged as the largest single party, well ahead of Koštunica's party, which came second. The leader of the Radicals, Vojislav Šešelj, who was said to be an admirer of Hitler, was in jail in The Hague awaiting trial on war crimes charges. The election result was a great disappointment to the USA and the EU, which were both hoping that extreme Serb nationalism had been eradicated. In July 2008 Radovan Karadžič, the former Bosnian Serb leader, was arrested after 13 years in hiding and sent to The Hague to be tried for war crimes.

9.8 EUROPE SINCE MAASTRICHT

With the continued success of the European Union, more states applied to join. In January 1995, Sweden, Finland and Austria became members, bringing the total membership to 15. Only Norway, Iceland and Switzerland of the main western European states remained outside. Important changes were introduced by *the Treaty of Amsterdam*, signed in 1997. This further developed and clarified some of the points of the 1991 Maastricht agreement: the Union undertook to promote full employment, better living and working conditions, and more generous social policies. The Council of Ministers was given the power to penalize member states which violated human rights; and the European parliament was given more powers. The changes came into effect on 1 May 1999.

(a) Enlargement and reform

As Europe moved into the new millennium, the future looked exciting. The new European currency – the euro – was introduced in 12 of the member states on 1 January 2002. And there was the prospect of a gradual enlargement of the Union. Cyprus, Malta and Turkey had made applications for membership, and so had Poland and Hungary, all of whom hoped to join in 2004. Other countries in eastern Europe were keen to join – including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. There seemed every chance that sooner or later the Union would double in size. This prospect raised a number of issues and concerns.

- It was suggested that most of the former communist states of eastern Europe were so economically backward that they would be unable to join on equal terms with the advanced members such as Germany and France.
- There were fears that the Union would become too large: this would slow down decision-making and make it impossible to get consensus on any major policy.
- The federalists, who wanted closer political integration, believed that this would become almost impossible in a Union of some 25 to 30 states, unless a two-speed Europe emerged. States in favour of integration could move rapidly towards a federal system similar to the one in the USA, while the rest could move more slowly, or not at all, as the case might be.
- There was a feeling that the Union's institutions needed reforming to make them more open, more democratic and more efficient – in order to speed up policy-making. The Union's prestige and authority took a severe blow in March 1999 when a report revealed widespread corruption and fraud in high places; the entire Commission of 20 members was forced to resign.

(b) The Treaty of Nice

It was to address the need for reform, in preparation for enlargement, that the *Treaty of Nice* was agreed in December 2000 and formally signed in February 2001; it was scheduled to come into operation on 1 January 2005.

- New voting rules were to be introduced in the Council of Ministers for the approval of policies. Many areas of policy had required a unanimous vote, which meant that one country could effectively veto a proposal. Now most policy areas were transferred to a system known as 'qualified majority voting' (QMV); this required that a new policy needed to be approved by members representing at least 62 per cent of the EU population, and the support of either a majority of members or a majority of votes cast. However, taxation and social security still required unanimous approval. The membership of the Council was to be increased: the 'big four' (Germany, UK, France and Italy) were each to have 29 members instead of 10, while the smaller states had their membership increased by roughly similar proportions – Ireland, Finland and Denmark, 7 members instead of 4; and Luxembourg, 4 members instead of 2. When Poland joined in 2004, it would have 27 members, the same number as Spain.
- The composition of the European parliament was to be changed to reflect more closely the size of each member's population. This involved all except Germany and Luxembourg having fewer MEPs than previously – Germany, by far the largest member with a population of 82 million, was to keep its 99 seats, Luxembourg, the smallest with 400 000, was to keep its 6 seats. The UK (59.2 million), France (59 million) and Italy (57.6 million) were each to have 72 seats instead of 87; Spain (39.4 million) was to have 50 seats instead of 64, and so on, down to Ireland (3.7 million), which would have 12 seats instead of 15. On the same basis, provisional figures were set for the likely new members: for example Poland, with a population similar in size to that of Spain, would also have 50 seats, and Lithuania (like Ireland with 3.7 million) would have 12 seats.
- The five largest states, Germany, UK, France, Italy and Spain, were to have only one European commissioner each instead of two. Each member state would have one commissioner, up to a maximum of 27, and the president of the Commission was to have more independence from national governments.
- 'Enhanced co-operation' was to be allowed. This meant that any group of eight or more member states which wanted to move to greater integration in particular areas would be able to do so.
- A German–Italian proposal was accepted that a conference should be held to clarify and formalize the constitution of the EU, by 2004.
- A plan for a European Union Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) of 60 000 troops was approved, to provide military back-up in case of emergency, though it was stressed that NATO would still be the basis of Europe's defence system. This did not please the French president, Jacques Chirac, who wanted the RRF to be independent of NATO. Nor did it please the USA, which was afraid that the EU defence initiative would eventually exclude the USA. In October 2003, as discussions were taking place in Brussels on how best to proceed with EU defence plans, the US government complained that it was being kept in the dark about Europe's intentions, claiming that the EU plans 'represented one of the greatest dangers to the transatlantic relationship'. It seemed that although the Americans wanted Europe to take on more of the world's defence and anti-terrorist burden, it intended this to be done under US direction, working through NATO, not independently.

Before the Treaty of Nice could be put into operation in January 2005, it had to be approved by all 15 member states. It was therefore a serious blow when, in June 2001, Ireland voted in a referendum to reject it. Ireland had been one of the most co-operative and pro-European members of the Union; but the Irish resented the fact that the changes would increase the power of the larger states, especially Germany, and reduce the influence of the smaller states. Nor were they happy at the prospect of Irish participation in peacekeeping forces. There was still time for the Irish to change their minds, but the situation would need careful handling if voters were to be persuaded to back the agreement. When the European Commission president, Romano Prodi of Italy, announced that enlargement of the Union could go ahead in spite of the Irish vote, the Irish government was outraged. His statement prompted accusations from across the Union that its leaders were out of touch with ordinary citizens.

(c) Problems and tensions

Instead of a smooth transition to an enlarged and united Europe in May 2004, the period after the signing of the Treaty of Nice turned out to be full of problems and tensions. Some had been foreseen, but most of them were quite unexpected.

- Predictably, the divisions widened between those who wanted a much closer political union – a sort of United States of Europe – and those who wanted a looser association in which power remained in the hands of the member states. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany wanted a strong European government with more power given to the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, and a European Union constitution embodying his vision of a federal system. He was supported by Belgium, Finland and Luxembourg. On the other hand, Britain felt that political integration had gone far enough, and did not want the governments of the individual states to lose any more of their powers. The way forward was through closer co-operation between the national governments, not through handing control over to a federal government in Brussels or Strasbourg.
- The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA threw the EU into confusion. The EU leaders were quick to declare solidarity with the USA and to promise all possible co-operation in the war against terrorism. However, foreign and defence issues were areas where the EU was not well equipped to take rapid collective action. It was left to the leaders of individual states – Schröder, Chirac and UK prime minister Blair – to take initiatives and promise military help against terrorism. This in itself was resented by the smaller member states, which felt they were being by-passed and ignored.
- The attack on Iraq by the USA and the UK in March 2003 caused new tensions. Germany and France were strongly opposed to any military action not authorized by the UN; they believed that it was possible to disarm Iraq by peaceful means, and that war would cause the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, destroy the stability of the whole region and hamper the global struggle against terrorism. On the other hand, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Denmark, together with the prospective new members – Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – were in favour of Britain's joint action with the USA. American Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dismissed the German and French opposition, claiming that they represented 'old Europe'. An emergency European Council meeting was held in Brussels in February, but it failed to resolve the basic differences: the UK, Italy and Spain

wanted immediate military action while France and Germany pressed for more diplomacy and more weapons inspectors. This failure to agree on a unified response to the Iraq situation did not bode well for the prospects of formulating a common foreign and defence policy, as required by the new EU constitution due to be debated in December 2003.

- A rift of a different sort opened up over budgetary matters. In the autumn of 2003 it was revealed that both France and Germany had breached the EU rule, laid down at Maastricht, that budget deficits must not exceed 3 per cent of GDP. However, no action was taken: the EU finance ministers decided that both states could have an extra year to comply. In the case of France, it was the third consecutive year that the 3 per cent ceiling had been breached. This bending of the rules in favour of the two largest member states infuriated the smaller members. Spain, Austria, Finland and the Netherlands opposed the decision to let them off. It raised a number of questions: what would happen if smaller countries broke the rules – would they be let off too? If so, wouldn't that make a mockery of the whole budgetary system? Was the 3 per cent limit realistic anyway in a time of economic stagnation?
- The most serious blow – in December 2003 – came when a summit meeting in Brussels collapsed without reaching agreement on the new EU constitution, which was designed to streamline and simplify the way the Union worked. Disagreement over the issue of voting powers was the main stumbling block.

Failure to agree on the new constitution was not a total disaster; the enlargement of the EU was still able to go ahead as planned on 1 May 2004; the ten new members were the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. But it was clear that the future of the Union was going to be fraught with problems. With some 25 or more members to deal with, the main issue was how to balance the interests of the smaller and larger states. Happily, most of the problems seemed to have been overcome when, in June 2004, a Constitutional Treaty was drawn up, to be presented to member states for ratification. The new constitution was something of a triumph: it brought together the confusing hotchpotch of previous treaties, and made for much smoother decision-making. It appeared to allow the national parliaments rather more powers than previously – for example, there was a procedure for members to leave the Union if they chose to; and states kept their veto on taxation, foreign policy and defence. The areas over which the EU had overriding control were competition policy, customs, trade policy and protection of marine life. The dispute over the voting system was also resolved: for a measure to pass, it must be supported by at least 15 countries representing 65 per cent of the EU's total population of 455 million; at least four countries with 35 per cent of the population would be required to block a measure. This was a safeguard to prevent the biggest countries from riding roughshod over the interests of the smaller ones. Spain, which had protested strongly that the previous proposals disadvantaged the smaller members, was happy with the compromise. The next problem was to get the new constitution ratified by all the members, and this would involve at least six national referendums. Unfortunately in 2005 it was rejected by Dutch and French voters, and it was decided that there should be a 'period of reflection'.

Eventually a new agreement was drawn up, preserving many of the reforms of the previous constitution but amending the ones that had raised objections. Signed by all 27 member states at Lisbon in December 2007, the stated aim of the treaty was 'to complete the process started by the Treaty of Amsterdam [1997] and by the Treaty of Nice [2001] with a view to enhancing the efficiency and democratic legitimacy of the Union and to improving the coherence of its actions'.

9.9 THE EUROPEAN UNION IN CRISIS

In a referendum held in June 2008, well over half the Irish voters rejected the Lisbon Treaty. The Germans and French, who were mainly responsible for the form of the treaty, were furious. The Germans threatened Ireland with expulsion from the EU, and President Sarkozy announced that the Irish must hold a second referendum. Before this took place, the economic situation in Europe had changed dramatically: in September 2008 in the USA there occurred the worst financial collapse since the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The effects soon spread to Europe; by the end of 2008 the demand for European exports had contracted alarmingly, and one by one the member states of the EU plunged into recession. Worst affected were Spain and Ireland, the two countries which had enjoyed the highest growth rates in the EU since the introduction of the euro in 2002. As Perry Anderson explains:

> The crisis struck hardest of all in Ireland, where output contracted by 8.5 per cent between the first quarters of 2008 and 2009, and the fiscal deficit soared to over 15 per cent of GDP. Though a probable death warrant for the regime in place at the next polls, in the short run the debacle of the Celtic Tiger was a diplomatic godsend to it. Amid popular panic the government could now count on frightening voters into accepting Lisbon, however irrelevant it might be to the fate of the Irish economy.

In October 2009 Irish voters obligingly approved the Lisbon Treaty, which came into effect on 1 December 2009.

(a) The future of the European Union

All these problems should not be allowed to lead to the conclusion that the EU is a failure. Whatever happens in the future, nothing can take away the fact that since 1945, the countries of western Europe have been at peace with each other. It seems unlikely that they will ever go to war with each other again, if not absolutely certain. Given Europe's war-torn past, this is a considerable achievement, which must be attributed in large measure to the European movement.

However, the Union's development is not complete: over the next half-century Europe could become a united federal state, or, more likely, it could remain a much looser organization politically, albeit with its own reformed and streamlined constitution. Many people hope that the EU will become strong and influential enough to provide a counterbalance to the USA, which in 2004 seemed in a position to dominate the world and convert it into a series of carbon copies of itself. Already the EU had demonstrated its potential. With the 2004 enlargement, the EU economy could rival that of the USA both in size and cohesion. The EU was providing well over half the world's development aid – far more than the USA – and the gap between EU and US contributions was growing all the time. Even some American observers acknowledged the EU's potential; Jeremy Rifkin wrote: 'Europe has become the new "city upon a hill". … We Americans used to say that the American Dream is worth dying for. The new European Dream is worth living for.'

The EU has shown that it is prepared to stand up to the USA. In March 2002 plans were announced to launch a European Galileo space-satellite system to enable civilian ships and aircraft to navigate and find their positions more accurately. The USA already had a similar system (GPS), but it was mainly used for military purposes. The US government protested strongly against the EU proposal on the grounds that the European system might interfere with US signals. The French president, Chirac, warned that if the USA was allowed to dominate space, 'it would inevitably lead to our countries becoming first

scientific and technological vassals, then industrial and economic vassals of the US'. The EU stood its ground and the plan went ahead. According to Will Hutton, 'the US wanted a complete monopoly of such satellite ground positioning systems. … the EU's decision is an important declaration of common interest and an assertion of technological superiority alike: Galileo is a better system than GPS.'

Clearly the enlarged EU has vast potential, though it will need to deal with some serious weaknesses. The Common Agricultural Policy continues to encourage high production levels at the expense of quality, and causes a great deal of damage to the economies of the developing world; this needs attention, as does the whole system of food standards regulation. The confusing set of institutions needs to be simplified and their functions formalized in a new constitution. And perhaps most important – EU politicians must try to keep in touch with the wishes and feelings of the general public. They need to take more trouble to explain what they are doing, so that they can regain the respect and trust of Europe's ordinary citizens. In a move which boded well for the future, the European parliament voted by a large majority in favour of José Manuel Barroso, the former prime minister of Portugal, as the next president of the European Commission. The new president had pledged himself to reform the EU, to bring it closer to its largely apathetic citizens, to make it fully competitive and to give it a new social vision. His five-year term of office began in November 2004 and in September 2009 he was granted a second five-year term.

However, by that time the EU was facing two further problems: immigration and the deepening economic crisis. Increasing immigration into the EU, about half of which consisted of Muslims, led to racial and religious tensions; some observers were writing about the 'battle at the borders' to control and reduce the number of immigrants. By 2009 there were estimated to be between 15 and 18 million Muslim migrants in the richer western states of the EU. This might seem a small number out of a total population of perhaps 370 million, but what many people found worrying was that the birth rate among the native populations was declining, while that of the Muslims was increasing, especially in the big cities. In Brussels over half the children born every year were from Muslim immigrants. In Amsterdam there were more practising Muslims than either Protestants or Catholics. According to Perry Anderson, in 2009 the overall inflow of migrants into Europe was some 1.7 million a year.

> Poverty and unemployment in these communities is nearly always above the national average and discrimination pervasive. In a number of countries – France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy have been the most prominent to date – political parties have arisen whose appeal has been based on xenophobic opposition to it. The new diversity has not fostered harmony. It has stoked conflict.

Given the wave of terrorism perpetrated by Muslim extremists during the first decade of the twenty-first century, it was hardly surprising that some observers talked about the impending war between Islam and the West. The problems of immigration and unemployment were linked: the optimistic view was that if and when the economy of Europe recovered and there was full employment, tensions would fade and Muslims and Christians would be able to live together in harmony – multiculturalism could triumph after all!

However, in 2009, this seemed a forlorn hope – the crisis deepened and some economists were predicting that the euro was beyond salvation; some even thought the EU itself might disintegrate. In February 2012 Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, said that Europe was facing its gravest test for decades, and she predicted that 2012 would be worse than 2011. All governments were trying to cut costs by introducing unpopular austerity measures. Greece had 'manipulated' its borrowing figures to make them look less than they actually were, in order to be allowed to join the euro (2001). The consequence was that Greek debts were enormous, and for much of 2011 and 2012 the government seemed

to be on the verge of defaulting. This could have disastrous effects on banks and on the economies of other countries that had traded with Greece. Hungary's currency, the forint, was in free fall, while Italy, Ireland, Spain and Portugal had huge debts and could only borrow more at high rates of interest. And everywhere unemployment was rising, averaging over 10 per cent throughout the EU.

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Chapter

10 Conflict in the Middle East

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The area known as the Middle East has been one of the world's most troubled regions, especially since 1945. Wars and civil wars have raged almost non-stop, and there has hardly been a time when the whole region was at peace. The Middle East consists of Egypt, the Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Turkey, the Yemen republics, the United Arab Emirates and Oman (see Map 10.1). Most of these states, except Turkey and Iran, are peopled by Arabs; Iran, though not an Arab state, contains many Arabs living in the area around the northern end of the Persian Gulf. The Middle East also contains the small Jewish state of Israel, which was set up by the United Nations in 1948 in Palestine.

The creation of Israel in Palestine, an area belonging to the Palestinian Arabs, outraged Arab opinion throughout the world (other Arab states outside the Middle East are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya). The Arabs especially blamed Britain, who, they felt, had been more sympathetic to the Jews than to the Arabs; most of all they blamed the USA, which had supported the idea of a Jewish state very strongly. The Arab states refused to recognize Israel as a legal state and they vowed to destroy it. Although there were four short wars between Israel and the various Arab states (1948–9, 1956, 1967 and 1973), Arab attacks failed, and Israel survived. However, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians dragged on; even at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, no permanent peace agreement had been reached.

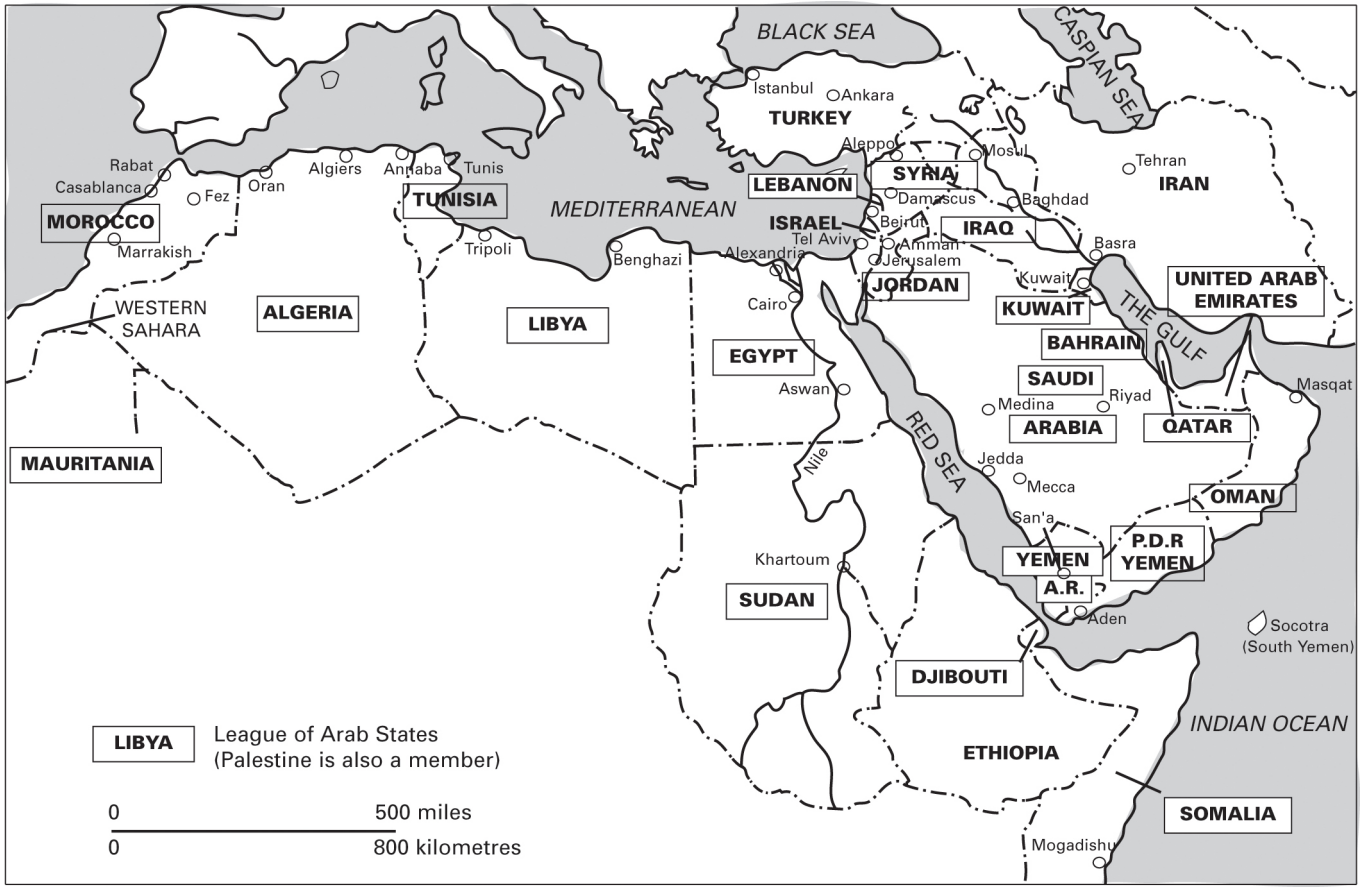
The Arab desire to destroy Israel tended for much of the time to overshadow all other concerns. However, two other themes ran through Middle East affairs which became mixed up with the anti-Israel struggle:

- the desire of some Arabs to achieve political and economic unity among the Arab states;
- the desire of many Arabs to put an end to foreign intervention in their countries.

The Middle East attracted a lot of attention from both western and communist powers, because of its strategic position and rich oil resources. In addition, there were a number of conflicts involving individual Arab states:

- There was civil war in the Lebanon which lasted for close on 15 years from 1975.
- There was a war between Iran and Iraq lasting from 1980 until 1988.
- In the First Gulf War (1990–1), Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait and were driven out again by an international coalition led by the USA.

Interpretations of the Middle East situation vary depending on whose viewpoint one looks at. For example, many British politicians and journalists regarded Colonel Nasser



Map 10.1 **The Middle East and North Africa**

(Egyptian leader 1954–70) as some kind of dangerous fanatic who was almost as bad as Hitler. On the other hand, most Arabs thought he was a hero, the symbol of the Arab people's move towards unity and freedom.

10.1 ARAB UNITY AND INTERFERENCE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD

(a) Arabs have several things in common

They all speak the Arabic language, they are nearly all Muslims (followers of the religion known as Islam), except for about half the population of Lebanon, who are Christian; and most of them wanted to see the destruction of Israel so that the Palestinian Arabs could have back the land which they feel is rightfully theirs. Many Arabs wanted to see the unity carried much further into some sort of political and economic union, like the European Community. As early as 1931 an Islamic conference in Jerusalem put out this announcement: 'The Arab lands are a complete and indivisible whole … all efforts are to be directed towards their complete independence, in their entirety and unified.'

Several attempts were made to increase unity among the Arab states.

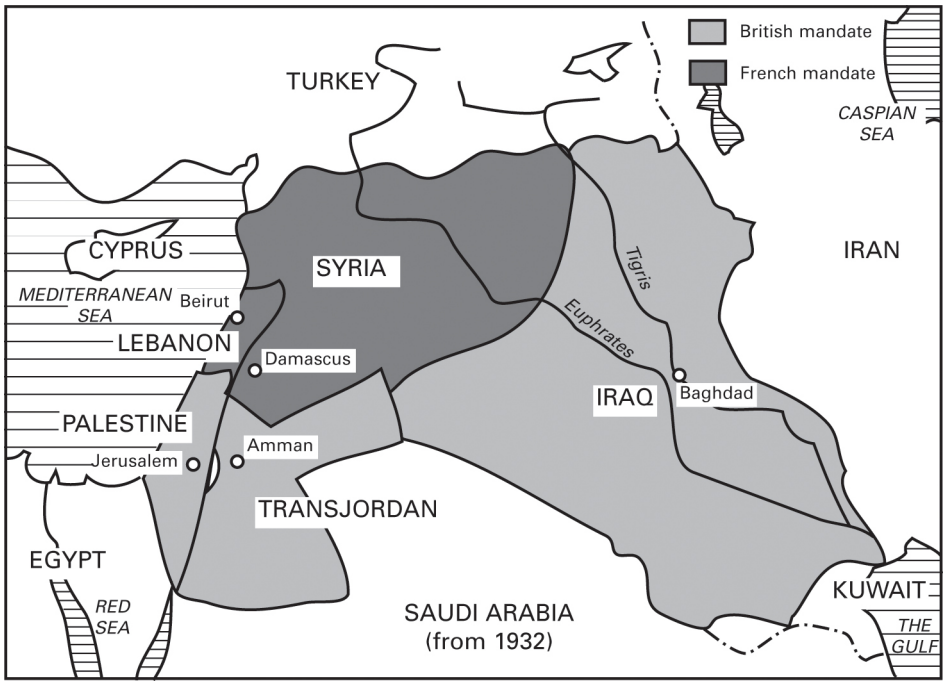
- *The Arab League*, *founded in 1945*, included Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen; membership later expanded to include 20 states in 1980. However, it achieved very little politically and was constantly hampered by internal squabbles.
- In the mid-1950s Arab unity (sometimes known as pan-Arabism, 'pan' meaning 'all') received a boost with *the energetic leadership of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt*, who gained enormous prestige in the Arab world after the 1956 Suez Crisis. In 1958 Syria joined Egypt to form *the United Arab Republic*, with Nasser as president. However, this only lasted until 1961 when Syria withdrew because of resentment at Nasser's attempts to dominate the union.
- After Nasser's death in 1970, his successor, President Sadat, organized a loose union between Egypt, Libya and Syria, known as *the Federation of Arab Republics*; but it never amounted to much.

In spite of their similarities, there were too many points on which the Arab states disagreed for unity ever to be really close. For example:

- Jordan and Saudi Arabia were ruled (and still are) by fairly conservative royal families who were often criticized for being too pro-British by the governments of Egypt and Syria, which were pro-Arab nationalist as well as socialist.
- The other Arab states fell out with Egypt in 1979 because Egypt signed a separate peace treaty with Israel. This caused Egypt to be expelled from the Arab League.

(b) Interference in the Middle East by other countries

- British and French involvement in the Middle East stretched back many years. Britain ruled Egypt from 1882 (when British troops invaded it) until 1922, when the country was given semi-independence under its own king. However, British troops still remained in Egypt and the Egyptians had to continue doing what Britain wanted. By the Versailles settlement at the end of the First World War, Britain and France were given large areas of the Middle East taken from the defeated Turks, to look after as mandates. Map 10.2 shows which areas were involved. Although



Map 10.2 **Areas given to Britain and France as mandates at the end of the First World War**

Britain gave independence to Iraq (1932) and to Jordan (1946), both remained pro-British. France gave independence to Syria and Lebanon (1945) but hoped to maintain some influence in the Middle East.

- The Middle East held a very important strategic position in the world – it acted as a sort of crossroads between the western nations, the communist bloc and the Third World countries of Africa and Asia.
- At one time the Middle East produced over a third of the world's oil supplies, the main producers being Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In the days before North Sea oil was available, and before the advent of nuclear power, the European nations were heavily dependent on oil supplies from the Middle East and wanted to make sure that the oil-producing states had friendly governments which would sell them oil cheaply.
- The lack of unity among the Arab states encouraged other countries to intervene in the Middle East.

Most of the Arab states had nationalist governments which bitterly resented western influence. *One by one*, *governments that were thought to be too pro-West were swept away and replaced by regimes which wanted to be non-aligned*; this meant being free to act independently of both East (Communist bloc) and West.

1 Egypt

At the end of the Second World War, British troops stayed on in the canal zone (the area around the Suez Canal). This was to enable Britain to control the canal, in which over

half the shares were owned by the British and French. In 1952 a group of Egyptian army officers, tired of waiting for the British to leave, overthrew Farouk, the King of Egypt (who was thought not to be firm enough with the British), and seized power themselves. *By 1954 Colonel Nasser had become president* and his policy of standing up to Britain soon led to the Suez War of 1956. This brought complete humiliation for Britain and was the end of British influence in Egypt.

2 Jordan

King Abdullah had been given his throne by the British in 1946. He was assassinated in 1951 by nationalists who felt that he was too much under Britain's thumb. His successor, King Hussein, had to tread very carefully to survive. He ended the treaty which allowed British troops to use bases in Jordan (1957), and all British troops were withdrawn.

3 Iraq

King Faisal of Iraq and his prime minister, Nuri-es-Said, were pro-British; in 1955 they signed an agreement with Turkey (*the Baghdad Pact*) to set up a joint defence and economic policy. Pakistan, Iran and Britain also joined, Britain promising to help Iraq if she was attacked. The British humiliation in the 1956 Suez War encouraged the anti-British movement in Iraq to act: Faisal and Nuri-es-Said were murdered and Iraq became a republic (1958). The new government was sympathetic towards Egypt and it withdrew Iraq from the Baghdad Pact. This marked the end of Britain's attempt to play a major role in Arab affairs.

4 Iran

Important changes were taking place in Iran, the only Middle East state which had a frontier with the USSR. In 1945 the Russians tried to set up a communist government in northern Iran, the part that bordered on the USSR and which had a large and active communist party. The western-educated Shah (ruler) of Iran, Reza Pahlevi, resisted the Russians and signed a defence treaty with the USA (1950); they provided him with economic and military aid, including tanks and jet fighters. The Americans saw the situation as part of the Cold War – Iran was yet another front where they thought it vital to prevent a communist advance. However, there was a strong nationalist movement in Iran which resented all foreign influence. Feelings soon began to turn against the USA and against Britain too. This was because Britain held a majority of the shares in *the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company* and its refinery at Abadan. It was widely felt that the British were taking too much of the profits, and in 1951 the Premier of Iran, Dr Mussadiq, nationalized the company (took it under the control of the Iranian government). However, most of the world, encouraged by Britain, boycotted Iran's oil exports and Mussadiq was forced to resign. In 1954 a compromise was reached in which British Petroleum was allowed 40 per cent of the shares. Iran now took 50 per cent of the profits, which the Shah was able to use for a cautious modernization and land reform programme.

This was not enough for the left and for the devout Muslims. They resented the Shah's close ties with the USA, which they considered to be an immoral influence on their country. They also suspected that a large slice of the country's wealth was finding its way into his private fortune. In January 1979 he was forced to leave the country, and *an Islamic republic was set up* under a religious leader, the Ayatollah (a sort of High Priest) Khomeini. Like Nasser, he wanted his country to be non-aligned.

10.2 THE CREATION OF ISRAEL AND THE ARAB–ISRAELI WAR, 1948–9

(a) Why did the creation of the state of Israel lead to war?

- The origin of the problem went back almost 2000 years to the year ad 71, *when most of the Jews were driven out of Palestine*, *which was then their homeland*, *by the Romans*. In fact, small communities of Jews stayed behind in Palestine, and over the following 1700 years there was a gradual trickle of Jews returning from exile. Until the end of the nineteenth century, however, there were never enough Jews to make the Arabs, who now looked on Palestine as their homeland, feel threatened.
- In 1897 some Jews living in Europe founded *the World Zionist Organization* at Basle in Switzerland. Zionists were people who believed that Jews ought to be able to go back to Palestine and have what they called 'a national homeland'; in other words, a Jewish state. Jews had recently suffered persecution in Russia, France and Germany, and a Jewish state would provide a safe refuge for Jews from all over the world. The problem was that *Palestine was inhabited by Arabs* who were understandably alarmed at the prospect of losing their land to the Jews.
- Britain became involved in 1917, when the foreign minister, Arthur Balfour, announced that *Britain supported the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine*. After 1919, when Palestine became a British mandate, large numbers of Jews began to arrive in Palestine, and the Arabs protested bitterly to the British that they wanted an independent Palestine for the Arabs, and an end to the immigration of Jews.

  The British government stated (1922) that there was no intention of the Jews occupying the whole of Palestine and that there would be no interference with the rights of the Palestinian Arabs. Balfour himself said in his declaration: 'nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. The British hoped to persuade Jews and Arabs to live together peacefully in the same state; they failed to understand the deep religious gulf between the two; and they failed to keep Balfour's promise.
- Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany after 1933 caused a flood of refugees, and by 1940 about half the population of Palestine was Jewish. From 1936 onwards there were violent protests by Arabs and an uprising, which the British suppressed with some brutality, killing over 3000 Arabs. *In 1937 the British Peel Commission proposed dividing Palestine into two separate states*, one Arab and one Jewish, but the Arabs rejected the idea. The British tried again in 1939, offering an independent Arab state within ten years, and Jewish immigration limited to 10 000 a year; this time the Jews rejected the proposal.
- The Second World War made the situation much worse: there were hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Hitler's Europe desperately looking for somewhere to go. In 1945 the USA pressed Britain to allow 100 000 Jews into Palestine; this demand was echoed by David Ben Gurion, one of the Jewish leaders, but the British, not wanting to offend the Arabs, refused.
- The Jews, after all that their race had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, were determined to fight for their 'national home'. They began a terrorist campaign against both Arabs and British; one of the most spectacular incidents was the blowing up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, which the British were using as their headquarters; 91 people were killed and many more injured. The British responded by arresting Jewish leaders and by turning back ships such as the Exodus, crammed with Jews intending to enter Palestine.
- The British, weakened by the strain of the Second World War, felt unable to cope. Ernest Bevin, the Labour foreign secretary, asked the United Nations to deal with the problem, and in November 1947, the UN voted to divide Palestine, setting aside

roughly half of it to form an independent Jewish state. Early in 1948 the British decided to come out altogether and let the UN carry out its own plan. Although fighting was already going on between Jews and Arabs (who bitterly resented the loss of half of Palestine), the British withdrew all their troops. In May 1948 Ben Gurion declared the independence of the new state of Israel. It was immediately attacked by Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon.

(b) Who was to blame for the tragedy?

- *Most of the rest of the world seemed to blame Britain for the chaos in Palestine.* Many British newspapers which supported the Conservative Party also criticized Bevin and Britain's Labour government for its handling of the situation. It was said that British troops should have stayed on to ensure that the partition of Palestine was carried out smoothly. The Arabs accused the British of being pro-Jewish, for letting far too many Jews into Palestine in the first place, and for causing them to lose half their homeland. The Jews accused the British of being pro-Arab, for trying to limit Jewish immigration.
- *Bevin blamed the USA for the chaos*, and there is some evidence to support his case. It was US President Truman who pressured Britain to allow 100 000 extra Jews to go to Palestine in April 1946. Although this was bound to upset the Arabs even more, Truman refused to provide any American troops to help keep order in Palestine, and refused to allow any more Jews to enter the USA. It was Truman who rejected *the British Morrison Plan (July 1946)*, which would have set up separate Arab and Jewish provinces under British supervision. It was the Americans who pushed the plan for partition through the UN, even though all the Arab nations voted against it; this was bound to cause more violence in Palestine.
- *Some historians have defended the British*, pointing out that they were trying to be fair to both sides, and that in the end, it was impossible to persuade both Arabs and Jews to accept a peaceful solution. The British withdrawal was understandable: it would force the Americans and the UN to take more responsibility for the situation they had helped create. It would save the British, who since 1945 had spent over £100 million trying to keep the peace, further expense which they could ill afford.

(c) The war and its outcome

Most people expected the Arabs to win easily, but against seemingly overwhelming odds, *the Israelis defeated them and even captured more of Palestine than the UN partition had given them*. They ended up with about three-quarters of Palestine plus the Egyptian port of Eilat on the Red Sea. The Israelis won because they fought desperately, and many of their troops had gained military experience fighting in the British army during the Second World War (some 30 000 Jewish men volunteered to fight for the British). The Arab states were divided among themselves and poorly equipped. The Palestinians themselves were demoralized, and their military organization had been destroyed by the British during the uprisings of 1936–9.

The most tragic outcome of the war was that the Palestinian Arabs became the innocent victims: they had suddenly lost three-quarters of their homeland, and the majority were now without a state of their own. Some were in the new Jewish state of Israel; others found themselves living in the area – known as the West Bank – occupied by Jordan. After some Jews had slaughtered the entire population of an Arab village in Israel, nearly a million Arabs fled into Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, where they had to live in miserable

refugee camps. The city of Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. The USA, Britain and France guaranteed Israel's frontiers, but the Arab states did not regard the ceasefire as permanent. They would not recognize the legality of Israel, and they regarded this war as only the first round in the struggle to destroy Israel and liberate Palestine.

10.3 THE SUEZ WAR OF 1956

(a) Who was to blame for the war?

It is possible to blame different countries depending on one's point of view.

- The Arabs blamed the Israelis, who actually began hostilities by invading Egypt.
- The communist bloc and many Arab states blamed Britain and France, accusing them of imperialist tactics (trying to keep control in the Middle East against the wishes of the Arab nations) by attacking Egypt. They accused the Americans of encouraging Britain to attack.
- The British, French and Israelis blamed Colonel Nasser of Egypt for being anti-Western. However, even the Americans thought that Britain and France had overreacted by using force, and most British historians agree.

  Colonel Nasser, *the new ruler of Egypt*, was aggressively in favour of Arab unity and independence, including the liberation of Palestine from the Jews; almost everything he did irritated the British, Americans or French:

  - He organized guerrilla fighters known as *fedayeen* ('self-sacrificers') to carry out sabotage and murder inside Israel, and Egyptian ships blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba leading to the port of Eilat, which the Israelis had taken from Egypt in 1949.
  - In 1936 Britain had signed an agreement with Egypt which allowed the British to keep troops at Suez. This treaty was due to expire in 1956, and Britain wanted it renewed. Nasser refused and insisted that all British troops should withdraw immediately the treaty ended. He sent help to the Algerian Arabs in their struggle against France, prodded the other Arab states into opposing the British-sponsored Baghdad Pact, and forced King Hussein of Jordan to dismiss his British army chief of staff.
  - He signed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia (September 1955) for Russian fighters, bombers and tanks, and Russian military experts went to train the Egyptian army.

  The Americans were outraged at this, since it meant that the West no longer controlled arms supplies to Egypt. Egypt now became part of the Cold War: any country which was not part of the Western alliance and which bought arms from eastern Europe was, in American eyes, just as bad as a communist country. It was seen as a sinister plot by the Russians to 'move into' the Middle East. The Americans therefore cancelled a promised grant of $46 million towards the building of a dam at Aswan (July 1956); their intention was to force Nasser to abandon his new links with the communists.
  Crisis point was reached when Nasser immediately retaliated by nationalizing the Suez Canal, intending to use the income from it to finance the dam. Shareholders in the canal, the majority of whom were British and French, were promised compensation.

Anthony Eden, *the British Conservative prime minister*, *took the lead at this point*. He believed that Nasser was on the way to forming a united Arabia under Egyptian control and communist influence, which could cut off Europe's oil supplies at will. He viewed Nasser as another Hitler or Mussolini, and according to historian Hugh Thomas, 'saw Egypt through a forest of Flanders poppies and gleaming jackboots'. He was not alone in this: Churchill remarked: 'We can't have this malicious swine sitting across our communications', and the new Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell, agreed that Nasser must not be appeased in the way that Hitler and Mussolini had been appeased in the 1930s. Everybody in Britain ignored the fact that Nasser had offered compensation to the shareholders and had promised that the ships of all nations (except Israel) would be able to use the canal.

Secret talks took place between the British, French and Israelis and a plan was hatched: Israel would invade Egypt across the Sinai peninsula, whereupon British and French troops would occupy the canal zone on the pretext that they were protecting it from damage in the fighting. Anglo-French control of the canal would be restored, and the defeat, it was hoped, would topple Nasser from power.

Recent research has shown that the war could easily have been avoided and that Eden was more in favour of getting rid of Nasser by peaceful means. In fact there was a secret Anglo-American plan (*Omega*) to overthrow Nasser using political and economic pressures. In mid-October 1956, Eden was still willing to continue talks with Egypt. He had called off the military operation and there seemed a good chance of compromise being reached over control of the Suez Canal. However, Eden was under pressure from several directions to use force. MI6 (the British Intelligence Service) and some members of the British government, including Harold Macmillan (chancellor of the exchequer), urged military action. Macmillan assured Eden that the USA would not oppose a British use of force. In the end, it was probably pressure from the French government which caused Eden to opt for a joint military operation with France and Israel.

(b) Events in the war

The war began with the planned Israeli invasion of Egypt (29 October). This was a brilliant success, and within a week the Israelis had captured the entire Sinai peninsula. Meanwhile the British and French bombed Egyptian airfields and landed troops at Port Said at the northern end of the canal. *The attacks caused an outcry from the rest of the world*, and the Americans, who were afraid of upsetting all the Arabs and forcing them into closer ties with the USSR, refused to support Britain, although they had earlier hinted that support would be forthcoming. At the United Nations, Americans and Russians for once agreed: they demanded an immediate ceasefire, and prepared to send a UN force. With the pressure of world opinion against them, *Britain*, *France and Israel agreed to withdraw*, while UN troops moved in to police the frontier between Egypt and Israel.

(c) The outcome of the war

It was a complete humiliation for Britain and France, who achieved none of their aims, and *it was a triumph for President Nasser*.

- The war failed to overthrow Nasser, and his prestige as the leader of Arab nationalism against interfering Europeans was greatly increased; for the ordinary Arab people, he was a hero.

- The Egyptians blocked the canal, the Arabs reduced oil supplies to western Europe, where petrol rationing was introduced for a time, and Russian aid replaced that from the USA.
- The British action soon lost them an ally in Iraq, where premier Nuri-es-Said came under increasing attack from other Arabs for his pro-British attitude; he was murdered in 1958.
- Britain was now weak and unable to follow a foreign policy independently of the USA.
- The Algerians were encouraged in their struggle for independence from France which they achieved in 1962.

The war was not without success for Israel: although she had been compelled to hand back all territory captured from Egypt, she had inflicted heavy losses on the Egyptians in men and equipment, which would take years to make good. For the time being the *fedayeen* raids ceased and Israel had a breathing space in which to consolidate. Following Britain's humiliation, the Israelis now looked towards the USA as their chief supporter.

10.4 THE SIX-DAY WAR OF 1967

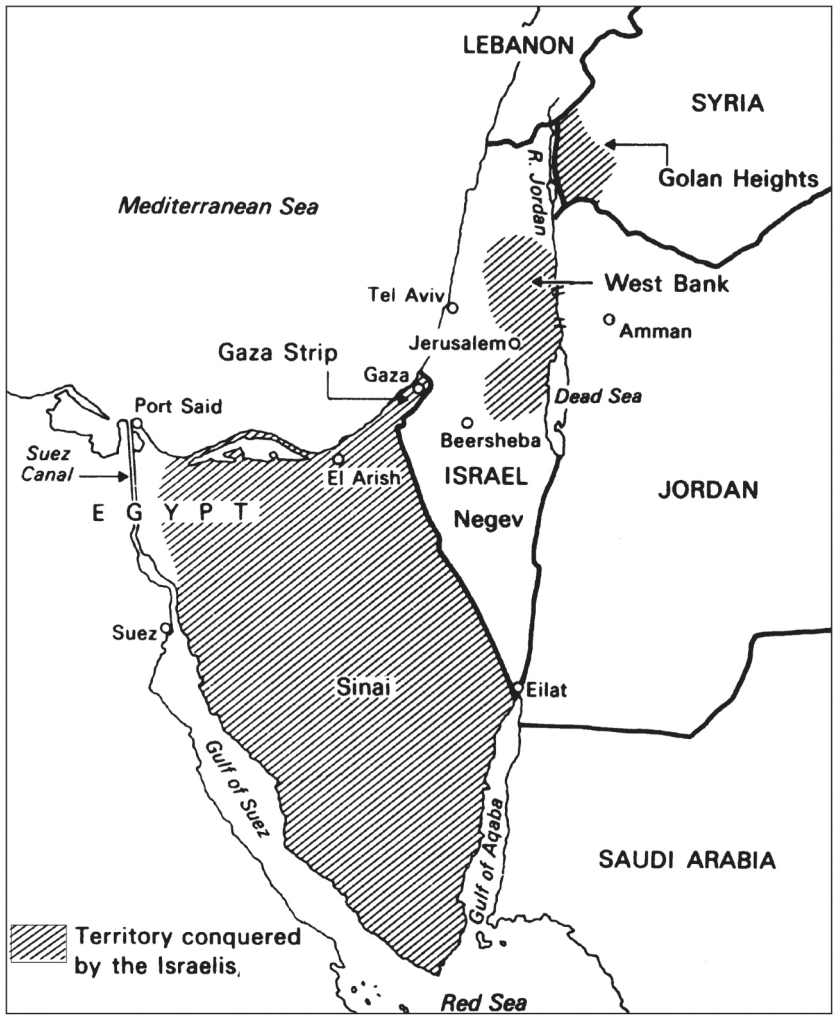
The Arab states had not signed a peace treaty at the end of the 1948–9 war and were still refusing to give Israel official recognition. In 1967 they joined together again in a determined attempt to destroy Israel. The lead was taken by Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

(a) The build-up to war

- *In Iraq*, a new government came to power in 1963 which was influenced by the ideas of *the Ba'ath Party* in neighbouring Syria. Supporters of the Ba'ath (meaning 'resurrection') believed in Arab independence and unity and were left-wing in outlook, wanting social reform and better treatment for ordinary people. They were prepared to co-operate with Egypt, and in June 1967 their president, Aref, announced: 'Our goal is clear – to wipe Israel off the map.'
- *In Syria*, political upheavals brought the Ba'ath Party to power in 1966. It supported *El Fatah*, *the Palestinian Liberation Movement*, a more effective guerrilla force than the *fedayeen*. Founded in 1957, Fatah eventually became the core section of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), with Yasser Arafat as one of its leaders. The Syrians also began to bombard Jewish settlements from the Golan Heights, which overlooked the frontier.
- *In Egypt*, Colonel Nasser was immensely popular because of his leadership of the Arab world and his attempts to improve conditions in Egypt with his socialist policies. These included limiting the size of farms to 100 acres and redistributing surplus land to peasants. Attempts were made to industrialize the country, and over a thousand new factories were built, almost all under government control. *The Aswan Dam project* was vitally important, providing electricity, and water for irrigating an extra million acres of land. After early delays at the time of the Suez War in 1956, work on the dam eventually got under way and the project was completed in 1971. With all going well at home and the prospect of effective help from Iraq and Syria, Nasser decided that the time was ripe for another attack on Israel. He began to move troops up to the frontier in Sinai and closed the Gulf of Aqaba.
- *The Russians encouraged Egypt and Syria* and kept up a flow of anti-Israeli propaganda (because Israel was being supported by the USA). Their aim was to increase

their influence in the Middle East at the expense of the Americans and Israelis. They hinted that they would send help if war came.

- *Syria*, *Jordan and Lebanon* also massed troops along their frontiers with Israel, while contingents from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Algeria joined them. Israel's situation seemed hopeless.
- *The Israelis decided that the best policy was to attack first rather than wait to be defeated*. They launched a series of devastating air strikes, which destroyed most of the Egyptian air force on the ground (5 June). Israeli troops moved with remarkable speed, capturing the Gaza Strip and the whole of Sinai from Egypt, the rest of Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Arabs had no choice but to accept a UN ceasefire order (10 June), and it was all over in less than a week. *Reasons for the spectacular Israeli success were*: the slow and ponderous Arab troop build-up which gave the Israelis plenty of warning, Israeli superiority in the air, and inadequate Arab preparations and communications.



Map 10.3 **The Situation After The 1967 War**

(b) Results of the war

- *For the Israelis it was a spectacular success*: this time they had ignored a UN order to return the captured territory; this acted as a series of buffer zones between Israel and the Arab states (see Map 10.3), and meant that it would be much easier to defend Israel. However, it did bring a new problem – how to deal with about a million extra Arabs who now found themselves under Israeli rule. Many of these were living in the refugee camps set up in 1948 on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.
- *It was a humiliation for the Arab states*, and especially for Nasser, who now realized that the Arabs needed outside help if they were ever to free Palestine. The Russians had been a disappointment to Nasser and had sent no help. To try and improve their relations with Egypt and Syria, the Russians began to supply them with modern weapons. Sooner or later the Arabs would try again to destroy Israel and liberate Palestine. The next attempt came in 1973 with the Yom Kippur War.

10.5 THE YOM KIPPUR WAR OF 1973

(a) Events leading up to the war

Several things combined to cause the renewed conflict.

- *Pressure was brought to bear on the Arab states by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)* under its leader Yasser Arafat, for some further action. When very little happened, a more extreme group within the PLO, called the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), embarked on a series of terrorist attacks to draw world attention to the grave injustice being done to the Arabs of Palestine. They hijacked airliners and flew three of them to Amman, the capital of Jordan, where they were blown up (1970). This was embarrassing for King Hussein of Jordan, who now favoured a negotiated peace, and in September 1970 he expelled all PLO members based in Jordan. However, terrorist attacks continued, reaching a horrifying climax when some members of the Israeli team were murdered at the 1972 Munich Olympics.
- *Anwar Sadat*, *the president of Egypt since Nasser's death in 1970*, *was becoming increasingly convinced of the need for a negotiated peace settlement with Israel*. He was worried that PLO terrorism would turn world opinion against the Palestinian cause. He was prepared to work either with the USA or with the USSR, but he hoped to win American support for the Arabs, so that the Americans would persuade the Israelis to agree to a peace settlement. However, the Americans refused to get involved.
- *Sadat*, *together with Syria*, *decided to attack Israel again*, *hoping that this would force the Americans to act as mediators*. The Egyptians were feeling more confident because they now had modern Russian weapons and their army had been trained by Russian experts.

(b) The war began on 6 October 1973

Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked early on the feast of Yom Kippur, a Jewish religious festival, hoping to catch the Israelis off guard. After some early Arab successes, the Israelis, using mainly American weapons, were able to turn the tables. They succeeded in

hanging on to all the territory they had captured in 1967 and even crossed the Suez Canal into Egypt. In one sense Sadat's plan had been successful – both the USA and the USSR decided it was time to intervene to try to bring about a peace settlement. Acting with UN co-operation, they organized a ceasefire, which both sides accepted.

(c) The outcome of the war

The end of the war brought a glimmer of hope for some sort of permanent peace. Egyptian and Israeli leaders came together (though not in the same room) in Geneva. The Israelis agreed to move their troops back from the Suez Canal (which had been closed since the 1967 war), which enabled the Egyptians to clear and open the canal in 1975 (but not to Israeli ships).

An important development during the war was that the Arab oil-producing states tried to bring pressure to bear on the USA and on western European states which were friendly to Israel, by reducing oil supplies. This caused serious oil shortages, especially in Europe. At the same time producers, well aware that oil supplies were not unlimited, looked on their action as a way of preserving resources. With this in mind, *the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)* began to raise oil prices substantially. This contributed to inflation and caused an energy crisis in the world's industrial nations.

10.6 CAMP DAVID AND THE EGYPTIAN–ISRAELI PEACE, 1978–9

(a) Why did the two sides begin to talk to each other?

- President Sadat had become convinced that *Israel could not be destroyed by force*, and that it was foolish to keep on wasting Egypt's resources in fruitless wars; but it took great courage to be the first Arab leader to meet the Israelis face to face. Even to talk with Israeli leaders meant conceding that Egypt recognized the lawful existence of the state of Israel. He knew that the PLO and the more aggressive Arab states, Iraq and Syria, would bitterly resent any approach. In spite of the dangers, Sadat offered to go to Israel and talk to the Knesset (Israeli parliament).
- *The Israelis were suffering economic problems*, partly because of their enormous defence expenditure, and partly because of a world recession. The USA was pressing them to settle their differences with at least some of the Arabs. They accepted Sadat's offer; he visited Israel in November 1977, and Menachem Begin, the Israeli prime minister, visited Egypt the following month.
- *President Carter of the USA played a vital role* in setting up formal negotiations between the two sides, which began in September 1978 at Camp David (near Washington).

(b) The peace treaty and its aftermath

With Carter acting as intermediary, the talks led to a peace treaty being signed in Washington in March 1979. *The main points agreed were*:

- The state of war that had existed between Egypt and Israel since 1948 was now ended;
- Israel promised to withdraw its troops from Sinai;

- Egypt promised not to attack Israel again and guaranteed to supply her with oil from the recently opened wells in southern Sinai;
- Israeli ships could use the Suez Canal.

The treaty was condemned by the PLO and most other Arab states (except Sudan and Morocco) and there was clearly a long way to go before similar treaties could be signed by Israel with Syria and Jordan. World opinion began to move against Israel and to accept that the PLO had a good case; but when the USA tried to bring the PLO and Israel together in an international conference, the Israelis would not co-operate. In November 1980 Begin announced that *Israel would never return the Golan Heights to Syria*, not even in exchange for a peace treaty; and *they would never allow the West Bank to become part of an independent Palestinian state*; that would be a mortal threat to Israel's existence. At the same time, resentment mounted among West Bank Arabs at the Israeli policy of establishing Jewish settlements on land owned by Arabs. Many observers feared fresh violence unless Begin's government adopted a more moderate approach.

The peace also seemed threatened for a time when *President Sadat was assassinated* by some extremist Muslim soldiers while he was watching a military parade (October 1981). They believed that he had betrayed the Arab and Muslim cause by doing a deal with the Israelis. However, Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak, bravely announced that he would continue the Camp David agreement.

For most of the 1980s the Arab–Israeli feud was overshadowed by the Iran–Iraq War, which occupied much of the Arab world's attention. But beginning in December 1987, there were massive demonstrations by Palestinians living in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (see Map 10.3). The *intifada* ('shaking off'), as it was known, was a long campaign of civil disobedience involving strikes, non-payment of taxes, and an attempt to boycott Israeli products. They were protesting against repressive Israeli policies and the brutal behaviour of Israeli troops in the camps and in the occupied territories. An Israeli clampdown failed to quell the *intifada*, which continued for over three years. The Israelis' tough methods earned them UN and worldwide condemnation.

10.7 PEACE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PLO

The election of a less aggressive government (Labour) in Israel in June 1992 raised hopes for better relations with the Palestinians. Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres both believed in negotiation, and were prepared to make concessions in order to achieve a lasting peace. Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, responded and talks opened. But there was so much mutual suspicion and distrust after all the years of hostility that progress was difficult. However, both sides persevered and by early 1996, remarkable changes had taken place.

(a) The peace accord of September 1993

This, the first major breakthrough, took place at a conference in Oslo, and became known as *the Oslo Accords*. *It was agreed that*:

- Israel formally recognized the PLO;
- the PLO recognized Israel's right to exist and promised to give up terrorism;

- the Palestinians were to be given limited self-rule in Jericho (on the West Bank) and in part of the Gaza Strip, areas occupied by Israel since the 1967 war. Israeli troops would be withdrawn from these areas.

Extremist groups on both sides opposed the agreement. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine still wanted a completely independent Palestinian state. Israeli settlers on the West Bank were against all concessions to the PLO. However, the moderate leaders on both sides showed great courage and determination, especially Yossi Beilin, the Israeli deputy foreign minister, and Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen), one of Arafat's advisers. Two years later they took an even more momentous step forward, building on the Oslo Accords.

Map 10.4 **The Israeli–Palestinian Agreement, 1995**

(b) Self-rule for the Palestinians (September–October 1995)

- Israel agreed to withdraw its troops from most of the West Bank (except Hebron), in stages over several years, handing over both civil and security powers to the PLO. This would end Israeli control of the areas they had held since 1967 (see Map 10.4). The areas would then remain demilitarized.
- The areas would be ruled by a parliament or Palestinian Council of 88 members, to be elected early in 1996 by all West Bankers and Arab residents of Jerusalem aged over 18. East Jerusalem was to be the capital.
- All Palestinian prisoners held by Israel (about 6000) would be released, in three phases.

Most of the world's leaders welcomed this brave attempt to bring peace to the troubled region. But once again extremists on both sides claimed that their leaders were guilty of 'shameful surrender'. Tragically, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli fanatic shortly after addressing a peace rally (4 November 1995). Peres became prime minister; the murder caused a revulsion of feeling against the extremists and the agreement was gradually put into operation. In January 1996, King Hussein of Jordan paid an official public visit to Israel for the first time, 1200 Palestinian prisoners were released and talks opened between Israel and Syria. The promised elections were held; although the extremists urged people to boycott them, there was an encouragingly large turnout of over 80 per cent. As expected, Yasser Arafat became the new Palestinian president and his supporters were in a large majority in the newly elected parliament. This government was expected to hold office until 1999, when, it was hoped, a permanent peace agreement would have been reached.

However, the situation changed rapidly during the spring of 1996: four suicide bombings, carried out by the militant Palestinian group Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement), claimed 63 lives; the militant Shiite Islamic group Hezbollah (Party of God), based in Lebanon, shelled villages in northern Israel from southern Lebanon. All this enabled the hardline Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who denounced Labour policy as 'too soft' towards the Palestinians, to win a narrow victory in the election of May 1996. This dismayed much of the outside world and threw the whole peace process into doubt.

10.8 CONFLICT IN THE LEBANON

Originally part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, Lebanon (see Map 10.5) was made a French mandate at the end of the First World War and became fully independent in 1945. It soon became a prosperous state, making money from banking and from serving as an important outlet for the exports of Syria, Jordan and Iraq. However, in 1975 civil war broke out, and although all-out war ended in 1976, chaos and disorder continued right through the 1980s as different factions struggled to gain influence.

(a) What caused civil war to break out in 1975?

1 Religious differences

The potential for trouble was there from the beginning, since the country was *a bewildering mixture of different religious groups*, some Muslim, some Christian, which had developed independently, separated from each other by mountain ranges.

Map 10.5 **The Lebanon**

There were four main Christian groups:

- Maronites (the wealthiest and most conservative);
- Greek Orthodox;
- Roman Catholics;
- Armenians.

There were three Muslim groups:

- Shia – the largest group, mainly poor working class;
- Sunni – a smaller group, but wealthier and with more political influence than the Shia;
- Druze – a small group living in the centre of the country, mainly peasants.

There was a long history of hatred between Maronites and Druze, but this seemed to be kept in check by the carefully framed constitution, which tried to give fair representation to all groups. The president was always a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni, the speaker (chairman of parliament) a Shia, and the army chief of staff a Druze. Of the 43 seats in parliament, the Maronites were allowed 13, Sunni 9, Shia 8, Greek Orthodox 5, Druze 3, Roman Catholics 3 and Armenians 2.

2 The presence of Palestinian refugees from Israel
This complicated the situation even more. By 1975 there were at least half a million of them living in squalid camps away from the main centres of population. The Palestinians were not popular in Lebanon because they were continually involved in frontier incidents with Israel, provoking the Israelis to hit back at the Palestinians in southern Lebanon. In particular the Palestinians, being left-wing and Muslim, alarmed conservative and Christian Maronites, who looked on the Palestinians as a dangerous destabilizing influence. By 1975 the PLO had its headquarters in Lebanon, and this meant that Syria, the chief supporter of the PLO, was constantly interfering in Lebanon's affairs.

3 A dispute between Muslims and Christians over fishing rights (1975)
The delicate balance between Muslims and Christians was upset in 1975 by a dispute over fishing rights. It began as an apparently minor incident, but it escalated when some Palestinians sided with the Muslims, and a group of right-wing Christians, known as the *Phalange*, began to attack Palestinians. Soon a full-scale civil war developed: the Maronites saw it as a chance to expel the Palestinians who had formed an alliance with the Druze (long-term enemies of the Maronites).

It is probably impossible to discover with complete certainty which side was responsible for the escalation of the war. Both sides claimed that the original fishing dispute could have been settled easily, and each blamed the other for escalating the violence. Either way, the PLO were certainly involved: the Phalangists claimed that PLO guerrillas had fired on a church where some party leaders were attending mass; the PLO claimed that the Phalangists started it by attacking a bus carrying Palestinians.

For a time it looked as though the Druze would win, but this alarmed the Israelis, who threatened to invade Lebanon. The Syrians did not want this to happen, and so in 1976 President Assad of Syria sent troops into the Lebanon to keep the PLO under some sort of control. Order was restored and it was a setback for the Druze and the PLO. It was the Syrians who now controlled Lebanon; Yasser Arafat, the PLO leader, had to agree to withdraw his troops from the area around Beirut (the capital of Lebanon).

(b) Chaos continues

It was over ten years before something approaching peace was restored in Lebanon, as *different conflicts raged in different places*.

- *In the south, bordering on Israel, fighting soon broke out between Palestinians and Christians*. The Israelis seized this opportunity to send troops in to help the Christians. A small semi-independent Christian state of Free Lebanon was declared under Major Haddad. The Israelis supported this because it acted as a buffer zone to protect them from further Palestinian attacks. The Palestinians and Muslims counter-attacked, and although by 1982 there were 7000 UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in the Lebanon) troops in the area, it was a constant struggle to keep the peace.
- *In 1980 there was a short struggle between supporters of the two main Maronite groups (the Gemayel and Chamoun families), which was won by the Gemayels.*
- *In 1982, in reprisal for a Palestinian attack on Israel, Israeli troops invaded Lebanon and penetrated as far as Beirut, while Israeli planes bombed the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. For a time the Gemayels, supported by the Israelis, were in control of Beirut. During this period the Palestinians were expelled from Beirut, and from then on the PLO was divided. The hardliners went to Iraq and the rest dispersed into different Arab countries, where they were, on the whole, not welcome. The Israelis withdrew and a multinational force (made up of troops from*

the USA, France, Italy and Britain) took their place to maintain the peace. However, a spate of attacks and suicide bombings forced them to withdraw.

- *In 1984 an alliance of Shia militia (known as Amal) and Druze militia, backed by Syria, drove President Gemayel out of Beirut. Then the Shia and Druze themselves came to blows in a struggle for control of West Beirut. Yasser Arafat used the general confusion to* rearm his Palestinians in the refugee camps.

At the end of 1986, the situation was extremely complex:

- Shiite Amal militia, backed by Syria, alarmed at the renewed strength of the PLO, which seemed likely to set up a state within a state, were besieging the refugee camps, hoping to starve them into surrender.
- At the same time an alliance of Druze, Sunni and communists was trying to drive Amal out of West Beirut. Another more extreme Shia group, known as Hezbollah (Party of God), which was backed by Iran, was also involved in the struggle.
- Early in 1987 fierce fighting again erupted between Shia and Druze militia for control of West Beirut. Several European and American hostages were seized, including Terry Waite, the Archbishop of Canterbury's special envoy, who had gone to West Beirut to try to negotiate the release of some earlier hostages.
- With the country apparently in a state of total disintegration, President Assad of Syria, responding to a request from the Lebanese government, again sent his troops and tanks into West Beirut (February 1987). Within a week, calm had been restored.

(c) Peace at last

Although assassinations of leading figures continued, the situation gradually stabilized. *In September 1990 important changes were introduced in the country's constitution, giving the Muslims fairer representation*. The membership of the National Assembly was increased to 108, equally divided between Christians and Muslims. The government, with Syrian help, gradually restored its authority over more and more of the country and managed to get most of the militia armies disbanded. The government also succeeded in getting all the Western hostages released, the last of them in June 1992. All this was very much because of the Syrian presence; in May 1991 the two states signed a treaty of 'brotherhood and co-ordination'. However, this was strongly criticized by the Israelis, who claimed that the treaty marked the 'virtual annexation of Lebanon by Syria'. Israeli troops remained in southern Lebanon to safeguard their northern frontier.

(d) The July War of 2006

The Israelis eventually removed their troops from southern Lebanon, but not until 2000. However, they still occupied an area known as the Sheba'a farms, which, so they claimed, was part of Syria, and therefore there was no need for Israeli troops to move out. Hezbollah insisted that the Sheba'a farms belonged to Lebanon, and therefore Israel must withdraw. Many observers suspected that both Hezbollah and Syria, which supported Hezbollah, were using the situation as a pretext to justify continued hostility to Israel. They wanted to show support for the Palestinians, who were now involved in the second *intifada.* The dispute simmered on until in July 2006 Hezbollah decided to test Israel's reactions and at the same time help Hamas, which was being attacked by Israel: they ambushed an Israeli patrol. In total, eight Israeli soldiers were killed and two were taken prisoner. Hezbollah believed that Israel would be too busy with Hamas to retaliate. They were sadly mistaken.

In fact Israel had been looking for an excuse to destroy Hezbollah, and the USA was urging them to take action, as part of the general 'war on terror'.

The very day after the attack on the patrol, the Israeli response began. The Lebanese coast was blockaded, and air strikes put Beirut airport out of action and destroyed Hezbollah's headquarters. After a few days, Israeli ground troops invaded. It soon became clear that Israel intended to destroy Hezbollah's fighting ability by bombing its arsenal of rockets, killing its leaders, cutting it off from its supply lines and from its supporters. This did not prevent Hezbollah from retaliating by firing rockets into Israel at an average of over a hundred a day for the 34 days that the war lasted. But Israeli bombing did enormous damage to civilians and their property in southern Lebanon, and, if anything, increased support for Hezbollah. In August 2006 the UN succeeded in arranging a ceasefire, but not before over a thousand Lebanese civilians and some 200 Hezbollah fighters had been killed and around a million civilians made homeless. On the Israeli side 118 soldiers and around 40 civilians were killed. Hezbollah claimed victory, but privately they admitted that it was a hollow victory and that had they known what Israel's response would be, it would never have kidnapped the soldiers. For Israel it left a rare taste of defeat; the ground invasion was poorly organized and ineffective, and it somewhat dented Israel's reputation for invincibility. David Hirst, in his book about Lebanon, concludes that what was meant to be a demonstration of strength by Israel turned out to be an almost comic illustration of ineffectuality. It seemed that Israel had learned nothing from the 1982 Lebanon War.

10.9 THE IRAN–IRAQ WAR, 1980–8

The Middle East and the Arab world were thrown into fresh confusion in September 1980 when Iraqi troops invaded Iran.

(a) Iraq's motives

President Saddam Hussein of Iraq had several motives for launching the attack.

- *He was afraid of militant Islam spreading across the border into Iraq from Iran*. Iran had become an Islamic republic in 1979 under the leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his fundamentalist Shiite Muslim supporters. They believed that the country should be run according to the Islamic religion, with a strict moral code enforced by severe punishments. According to Khomeini, 'in Islam the legislative power to establish laws belongs to God Almighty'. The population of Iraq was mainly Sunni Muslim, but there was a large Shia minority. Saddam, whose government was non-religious, was afraid that the Shias might rise up against him, and he had some of their leaders executed early in 1980. The Iranians retaliated by launching raids across the frontier.
- *The Iraqis claimed that the Iranian border province of Khuzestan should rightfully belong to them*. This was an area peopled largely by Arabs, and Saddam hoped that they would rally to support Iraq (most Iranians were Persians, not Arabs).
- *There was a long-standing dispute over the Shatt-el-Arab waterway*. This was an important outlet for the oil exports of both countries, and it formed part of the frontier between the two states. The Shatt-el-Arab had once been completely under Iraqi control, but five years earlier the Iranian government had forced Iraq to share control of it with Iran.

- *Saddam thought that the Iranian forces would be weak and demoralized so soon after the fundamentalist takeover*, so he expected a quick victory. It soon became clear that he had miscalculated badly.

(b) The war drags on

The Iranians quickly organized themselves to deal with the invasion, which began with the Iraqi seizure of the disputed waterway. The Iranians replied with mass infantry attacks against heavily fortified Iraqi positions. On paper Iraq seemed much the stronger, being well supplied with Soviet tanks, helicopter gunships and missiles, and some British and American weapons as well. However, the Iranian revolutionary guards, inspired by their religion, and ready to become martyrs, fought with fanatical determination; eventually they too began to get modern equipment (anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles) from China and North Korea (and secretly from the USA). As the war dragged on, Iraq concentrated on strangling Iranian oil exports, which paid for their arms supplies; Iran meanwhile captured Iraqi territory, and early in 1987 their troops were only ten miles from Basra, Iraq's second most important city, which had to be evacuated. By this time the territorial dispute had become lost in the deeper racial and religious conflict: Khomeini had sworn never to stop fighting until his Shia Muslim fundamentalists had destroyed the 'godless' Saddam regime.

The war had important international repercussions.

- *The stability of the entire Arab world was threatened*. The more conservative states – Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait – gave cautious support to Iraq; but Syria, Libya, Algeria, South Yemen and the PLO were critical of Iraq for starting the war at a time when, they believed, all Arab states should have been concentrating on the destruction of Israel. The Saudis and the other Gulf states, suspicious of Khomeini's fundamentalist brand of Islam, wanted to see Iran's ability to dominate the Persian Gulf controlled. As early as November 1980 an Arab summit conference in Amman (Jordan), to draw up new plans for dealing with Israel, failed to get off the ground because the anti-Iraq states, led by Syria, refused to attend.
- *The attacks on Iran's oil exports threatened the energy supplies of the West*, and at various times brought American, Russian, British and French warships into the region, raising the international temperature. In 1987 the situation took a more dangerous turn as oil tankers, whatever their nationality, were threatened by mines; which side was responsible for laying them was open to debate.
- *The success of Iran's Shia fundamentalist troops*, *especially the threat to Basra*, *alarmed the non-religious Arab governments*, and many Arabs were afraid of what might happen if Iraq was defeated. Even President Assad of Syria, at first a strong supporter of Iran, was worried in case Iraq split up and became another Lebanon; this could well destabilize Syria itself. An Islamic conference held in Kuwait (January 1987) was attended by representatives of 44 nations; but Iran's leaders refused to attend, and no agreement could be reached on how to bring the war to an end.
- The war entered a new and even more terrible phase towards the end of 1987 when both sides began to bombard each other's capital cities, Tehran (Iran) and Baghdad (Iraq), causing thousands of deaths.

(c) The end of the war, 1988

Although neither side had achieved its aims, the cost of the war, both economically and in human lives, was telling heavily. Both sides began to look for a way to end

the fighting, though for a time they continued to pour out propaganda; Saddam talked about 'total victory' and the Iranians demanded 'total surrender'. The UN became involved, did some straight talking to both sides, and succeeded in arranging a cease-fire (August 1988). This was monitored by UN troops, and against all expectations, the truce lasted. Peace negotiations opened in October 1988 and terms were finally agreed in 1990.

10.10 THE GULF WAR, 1990–1

Even before he had accepted the peace terms at the end of the Iran–Iraq War, Saddam Hussein began his next act of aggression. His forces invaded and quickly occupied the small neighbouring state of Kuwait (August 1990).

(a) Saddam Hussein's motives

- His real motive was probably to get his hands on the wealth of Kuwait, since he was seriously short of cash after the long war with Iran. Kuwait, though small, had valuable oil wells, which he would now be able to control.
- He claimed that Kuwait was historically part of Iraq, though in fact Kuwait had existed as a separate territory – a British protectorate – since 1899, whereas Iraq had not been created until after the First World War.
- He did not expect any action from the outside world now that his troops were firmly entrenched in Kuwait, and he had the strongest army in the region. He thought Europe and the USA were reasonably amenable to him since they had supplied him with arms during his war with Iran. After all, the USA had been supporting him all the way through his war against the Iranian regime that had overthrown the Shah, an American ally. The Americans valued him as a stabilizing influence within the region and in Iraq itself – they had taken no action when Saddam had suppressed the Shias, nor when he brutally crushed the Kurds (who were demanding an independent state) in the north of Iraq, in 1988.

(b) The world unites against Saddam Hussein

Once again, *as in the case of Iran*, *Saddam had miscalculated*. President Bush of the USA took the lead in pressing for action to remove the Iraqis from Kuwait. The UN placed trade sanctions on Iraq, cutting off her oil exports, her main source of income. Saddam was ordered to remove his troops by 15 January 1991, after which the UN would use 'all necessary means' to clear them out. Saddam hoped that this was all bluff and talked of 'the mother of all wars' if they tried to throw him out. But Bush and Margaret Thatcher had decided that Saddam's power must be curbed; he controlled too much of the oil that the industrial west needed. Fortunately for Britain and the USA, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt were also nervous about what Saddam might do next, so they supported the UN action.

In spite of frantic diplomatic efforts, *Saddam Hussein felt that he could not lose face by withdrawing from Kuwait*, though he knew that an international force of over 600 000 had been assembled in Saudi Arabia. More than thirty nations contributed with troops, armaments or cash; for example the USA, Britain, France, Italy, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia provided troops; Germany and Japan donated cash. When the 15 January deadline passed, *Operation Desert Storm* was launched against the Iraqis.

The campaign, *in two parts*, *was quickly successful*. First came a series of bombing attacks on Baghdad (the Iraqi capital), whose unfortunate citizens again suffered heavy casualties, and on military targets such as roads and bridges. The second phase, the attack on the Iraqi army itself, began on 24 February. *Within four days the Iraqis had been driven out of Kuwait and routed*. Kuwait was liberated and Saddam Hussein accepted defeat. However, although Iraq lost many troops (some estimates put Iraqi dead at 90 000 compared with less than 400 for the allies), Saddam was allowed to withdraw with much of his army intact. The retreating Iraqis were at the mercy of the allies, but Bush called a ceasefire, afraid that if the slaughter continued, the allies would lose the support of the other Arab nations.

(c) The aftermath of the war – Saddam Hussein survives

The war had unfortunate consequences for many of the Iraqi people. It was widely expected outside Iraq that after this humiliating defeat, Saddam Hussein would soon be overthrown. There were uprisings of Kurds in the north and Shia Muslims in the south, and it seemed as though Iraq was breaking up. However, the allies had left Saddam enough troops, tanks and aircraft to deal with the situation, and both rebellions were ruthlessly crushed. At first nobody intervened: Russia, Syria and Turkey had Kurdish minorities of their own and did not want the rebellion spreading over from Iraq. Similarly a Shiite victory in southern Iraq would probably increase the power of Iran in that region, and the USA did not want that. But eventually world opinion became so outraged at Saddam's continued ruthless bombings of his people that the USA and Britain, with UN backing, declared the areas 'no-fly zones', and used their air power to keep Saddam's aircraft out. And so Saddam Hussein remained in power.

The war and its aftermath were very revealing about the motives of the West and the great powers. Their primary concern was not with international justice and moral questions of right and wrong, but with their own self-interest. They only took action against Saddam in the first place because they felt he was threatening their oil supplies. Often in the past when other small nations had been invaded, no international action had been taken. For example, when East Timor was occupied by neighbouring Indonesia in 1975, the rest of the world ignored it, because their interests were not threatened. After the Gulf War, Saddam, who on any assessment must rank as one of the most brutal dictators of the century, was allowed to remain in power because the West thought that his survival was the best way of keeping Iraq united and the region stable.

10.11 ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS FIGHT AGAIN

(a) The failure of the Oslo Accords

Benjamin Netanyahu, *Israeli prime minister from May 1996 until May 1999*, *never accepted the agreements reached in Oslo*. He spent much of his time in office trying to backtrack from the commitments made by the previous Israeli government and allowed the building of large Jewish settlements on the outskirts of Jerusalem, which would cut off Arab villages on the eastern side of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. This only caused more violent protests from the Palestinians; Yasser Arafat released some Hamas activists from jail and suspended security co-operation with Israel. US president Clinton tried to keep the peace process on course by calling both sides together at Camp David in October 1998, but little progress was made. Netanyahu, facing recession and rising unemployment, called an election in May 1999. In the contest for prime minister, the candidate

of the Labour Party (now calling itself 'One Israel') was Ehud Barak, a retired general. He campaigned on promises of economic growth and a renewed drive for peace, and he won a decisive victory.

Barak's victory raised great hopes: he wanted a comprehensive peace settlement which included Syria (which had not signed a peace treaty with Israel after the 1973 war) as well as the Palestinians, and he tried hard to achieve one. Sadly his efforts failed.

- Although the Syrians agreed to talk, negotiations finally broke down in March 2000 when they insisted that there should be a return to the pre-Six-Day-War frontiers before any further talks could take place. Barak could not agree to this without alienating a majority of Israelis.
- In spite of this, in May 2000 Barak went ahead with his election promise to withdraw Israeli troops from southern Lebanon, where they had remained policing a security zone since 1985.
- Barak offered to share Jerusalem with the Palestinians, but Arafat refused to compromise and continued to demand full Palestinian sovereignty in East Jerusalem.

By the summer of 2000, Barak's government was falling apart, many of his supporters feeling that he was making too many concessions to the Arabs and getting nothing in return. An American-sponsored summit meeting at Camp David in July failed.

Clinton made one last effort to bring peace before his term as president ended. (The new president, George W. Bush, was due to take office on 20 January 2001.) At a meeting in the White House (in December 2000), he announced his new plan to representatives of both sides. It moved some way towards accommodating Palestinian demands: it required the Israelis to withdraw completely from Gaza and from about 95 per cent of the West Bank, and there was to be an independent Palestinian state. With regard to Jerusalem, 'the general principle is that Arab areas are Palestinian and Jewish ones are Israeli'. At a conference held at Taba in Egypt to discuss the plan (January 2001), agreement seemed tantalizingly close; only the question of Jerusalem remained as a major obstacle, but neither side would compromise over this critical issue. The Oslo peace process had well and truly foundered.

(b) The problem of Jerusalem

The Oslo Accords had by-passed several vital questions, such as the status of Jerusalem, *the right of return of the 1948 refugees*, *and the future of the Jewish settlements in the areas occupied by Israel since 1967*. The intention was that these thorny problems would be negotiated towards the end of a five-year transition period, but the first time they were discussed in detail was at Clinton's Camp David summit in July 2000.

The original UN intention when Israel was created was that Jerusalem should be under international control. However, the fighting of 1948–9 ended with Jordan ruling East Jerusalem and Israel occupying West Jerusalem. This position remained until the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel captured East Jerusalem, along with the entire West Bank, from Jordan; it is still occupied by the Israelis today. *The problem is that Jerusalem has great symbolic and emotional significance for both sides*. For the Jews, Jerusalem was their ancient capital city, and they believe that Temple Mount was the site of their Temple in biblical times. For the Muslims, Jerusalem, known as Al-Haram al-Sharif, is the site from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended into heaven.

The Israelis were determined to hold on to Jerusalem; they took over Arab land and built new Jewish settlements, in violation of international law. International opinion and the UN repeatedly condemned these Israeli activities. However, in 1980 the Knesset (the

Israeli parliament) passed the Jerusalem Law which stated that 'Jerusalem, complete and unified, is the capital of Israel.' This provoked a storm of criticism from moderate Israelis who thought it was unnecessary, from world opinion, and from the UN Security Council which passed a resolution reprimanding Israel. Even the USA, which almost always supported Israel, abstained on this vote. This is why the 1995 agreements, which for the first time recognized the possibility of Jerusalem being divided, were such a major breakthrough. It also explains why the Palestinians were so bitterly disappointed when Netanyahu dropped the idea, following the assassination of Yitzak Rabin. When Clinton's Camp David summit failed in July 2000, another outbreak of violence was inevitable.

(c) Sharon and the intifada

On 28 September 2000, *Ariel Sharon*, *the leader of the opposition Likud party*, *surrounded by a large contingent of security men*, *paid a highly publicized visit to Temple Mount in Jerusalem*. He claimed that he was going to deliver 'a message of peace'. But to most of the rest of the world it seemed that this was a gesture to emphasize Israeli sovereignty over the whole of Jerusalem, and even a deliberate attempt to provoke violence, which would end the peace process. If this was indeed his motive, he was all too successful. His visit sparked off riots which spread from Temple Mount across the entire West Bank and Gaza, and among Arabs in Israel. It soon turned into *a full-scale uprising, which became known as the al-Aqsa (Jerusalem) intifada ('shaking-off')*. After the failure of Clinton's final attempts to bring peace, in January 2001, Sharon was elected prime minister, defeating Barak, who was seen as being too fond of offering concessions to Yasser Arafat (February 2001).

Sharon immediately announced that there would be no further negotiations while violence continued. His aim was to control the intifada by a combination of tough military action and international pressure. The Israelis started to build a protective wall around the West Bank; they claimed it was purely defensive, but unfortunately for the Palestinians, a number of their villages were trapped on the Israeli side of the barrier, which also included Jewish settlements built on Arab land. The more drastic the military action taken by Israel, the less international support it got. *For the next three years, the tragic cycle of suicide bombings*, *massive Israeli retaliations and short ceasefires interspersed with fruitless international efforts at mediation continued unabated*. For example:

- A Hamas suicide bomber killed five Israelis in Netanya, a popular seaside resort. The Israelis responded with 16 air strikes, killing 16 Palestinians on the West Bank (May 2001).
- In August 2001 Israelis assassinated Abu Ali Mustafa, deputy leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), in Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority.
- Following the 11 September terrorist attacks on the USA, President Bush took steps to prevent the Palestine issue becoming mixed up in his 'war on terrorism'. He announced new plans for peace, including an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.
- The PFLP assassinated the Israeli tourism minister, a hardline anti-Palestinian and friend of Sharon (October 2001).
- Hamas suicide bombers killed 25 Israelis in Haifa and Jerusalem; ten others were killed when a bomb exploded in a bus. Israel responded by occupying Ramallah, and surrounding Arafat's headquarters. Arafat condemned terrorism and called for an

immediate ceasefire; Hamas called a halt to the suicide bombings (December 2001). The ceasefire lasted just over four weeks.

- During the early months of 2002, fighting became more vicious. After Palestinian gunmen had killed six Israeli soldiers near Ramallah, the Israelis occupied two large Palestinian refugee camps at Nablus and Jenin. The Palestinians carried out more attacks, and the Israelis sent 150 tanks and 20 000 troops into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and attacked Arafat's compound in Ramallah once again. It seemed that Sharon was doing everything he possibly could to injure Arafat, short of actually having him directly assassinated. There was heavy fighting in the Jenin refugee camp, and the Palestinians claimed that Israeli forces had carried out a massacre. The UN sent a team to investigate these claims, but the Israelis refused to let them in (February–April 2002). In March the UN for the first time endorsed the idea of an independent Palestinian state; UN secretary-general Annan accused Israel of the 'illegal occupation' of Palestinian land.
- Nevertheless the UN team collected sufficient information to publish a report on conditions in the West Bank and Gaza (referred to as 'the Occupied Territories'), in September 2002. It charged Israel with causing a humanitarian catastrophe among the Palestinians: the economy had been destroyed, unemployment stood at 65 per cent, half the population was living on less than $2 a day, schools and houses had been bulldozed and demolished, people deported and curfews imposed; ambulances were being prevented from passing roadblocks.
- The USA and Israel saw Yasser Arafat as the main obstacle to progress, since he would make no significant concessions and was either unwilling or unable to bring a lasting halt to Palestinian attacks. Having failed to kill him in the attacks on his compound, the Israeli leadership tried to sideline him by refusing to meet him and demanding the appointment of another leader to represent the Palestinians in negotiations. Consequently, in March 2003, Mahmoud Abbas was appointed to the newly created post of prime minister, although Arafat remained president, and continued to be the real power in the Palestinian Authority.

(d) The 'road map' for peace?

This new peace plan was drawn up originally in December 2002 by representatives of the European Union, Russia, the UN and the USA. Formal discussion had been delayed by the Israeli general election of January 2003 (won by Sharon), by the war in Iraq, and by US and Israeli insistence that they would only deal with Abbas rather than Arafat. At last, on 30 April 2003 it was formally presented, separately, to Abbas and Sharon. *The 'road map' aimed to achieve a final settlement of the entire Palestinian–Israeli conflict by the end of 2005*. *Its basic points were*:

- the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state existing side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours;
- there should be 'an unconditional cessation of violence' by both sides, a freeze on new Israeli settlements, the dismantling of all the 'illegal' ones built since Sharon came to power in March 2001 and a new Palestinian constitution and elections – all to be achieved by the end of May 2003;
- after the Palestinian elections, there would be an international conference to draw up the provisional frontiers of the new state – by the end of 2003;
- over the next two years – up to the end of 2005 – Israel and Palestine would negotiate final details such as the remaining settlements, refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the frontiers.

The ‘road map’ was accepted in principle by both the Palestinians and the Israelis, although Sharon had a number of reservations; for example, he would not recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their former homes in Israel. The Israeli cabinet voted narrowly in favour of the plan, the first time that they had countenanced the idea of a Palestinian state which would include some of the territory they had occupied since the Six-Day War in 1967. Referring to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Sharon made a historic statement: ‘To keep 3.5 million people under occupation is bad for us and for them. I have come to the conclusion that we have to reach a peace agreement.’

(e) What brought about the Israeli change of attitude?

Sharon’s change of heart did not come totally out the blue: already in November 2002 he had persuaded his Likud party to accept that an eventual Palestinian state was now inevitable and that ‘painful concessions’ would have to be made once violence ended. Fighting on this platform, Likud won the general election of January 2003, and Sharon remained prime minister. A combination of reasons caused him to relinquish his hardline vision of a Greater Israel stretching from the Mediterranean to the River Jordan, and including the whole of Jerusalem.

- After almost three years of violence, even Sharon began to realize that his policy was not working. The ferocity and determination of the Palestinian resistance astonished and dismayed most Israelis. Although international opinion condemned Palestinian suicide bombings, the disproportionate Israeli responses were even more unpopular; it was the Palestinian underdogs who won the sympathy of the rest of the world, except the USA, which almost invariably supported and financed Israel.
- Moderate Israeli opinion had turned against the hardline approach and many Israelis were horrified at events such as the ‘massacre’ in the Jenin refugee camp. Yitzhak Laor, an Israeli writer and poet, wrote: ‘There’s no doubt that Israel’s “assassination policy” – its killing of senior politicians – has poured petrol on the fire. … The bulldozer, once the symbol of the building of a new country, has become a monster, following the tanks, so that everybody can watch as another family’s home, another future disappears. … Enslaving a nation, bringing it to its feet, simply doesn’t work.’ One estimate suggested that 56 per cent of Israelis supported the ‘road map’.
- Even President Bush eventually began to lose patience with Sharon. The USA denounced the attacks on Arafat’s headquarters and told Sharon to withdraw his troops from the West Bank, pointing out that his attacks on the Palestinians were threatening to destroy the American-led coalition against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden. Bush was afraid that unless he did something to curb Sharon, the Arab states – Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia – might withdraw from the coalition. Bush also threatened to reduce US aid to Israel. Sharon’s first reaction was anger and defiance, but in the end he had to listen – a gradual withdrawal of troops from the West Bank got under way.
- Population trends have been suggested as another possible influence on Sharon. At the beginning of 2004 the population of Israel and Palestine was around 10 million – 5.4 million Jews and 4.6 million Arabs. At current rates of population growth, the number of Palestinian Arabs would overtake the number of Jews in the next six to ten years; within 20 years, this trend would threaten the very existence of the Jewish state. This is because, if it is a genuinely democratic state, which the Israelis claim to want, the Palestinians must have equal voting rights, and would therefore be in a majority. The best solution for both sides would be peace, and the creation of two separate states, as soon as possible.

(f) Difficult times ahead

Although both sides had accepted the 'road map' in principle, there were still grave doubts about exactly where it was leading. By the spring of 2004 no progress had been made to implement any of the points, and the plan was well behind schedule. In spite of all efforts, it had proved impossible to achieve a lasting ceasefire; violence continued and Mahmoud Abbas resigned in exasperation, blaming the Israelis for acting 'provocatively' every time the Palestinian militant groups – Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah – began a ceasefire. He was also involved in a power struggle with Arafat, who would not give him full powers to negotiate in his own way. He was replaced by Ahmed Qurie, who had been involved in the Oslo discussions in 1993.

In October 2003 some Israeli critics of Sharon, including Yossi Beilin (who had also been involved in the Oslo Peace Accords), held talks with some Palestinian leaders and together they produced *a rival, unofficial peace plan*. This was launched with great publicity at a ceremony in Geneva in December, and was welcomed as a sign of hope. The Israelis made some concessions: Jerusalem would be divided and incorporated in the Palestinian state, Israel would give up sovereignty over Temple Mount, and would abandon about 75 per cent of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank; these would be incorporated in the new Palestinian state. However, in return the Palestinians were required to give up the right of return for refugees and to accept financial compensation. For the vast majority of the Palestinians, this issue was at the heart of the conflict, and they could never willingly submit to such an agreement. For the Israelis, the abandonment of so many settlements was equally anathema. The stalemate continued during 2004.

(g) Why did the peace process stall in this way?

Basically the reason was that although the 'road map' and the so-called Geneva Accords represented some concessions by the Israelis, they did not go nearly far enough. Several vital points were omitted which the Palestinians had a right to expect would be included.

- There was no real acknowledgement that the Israeli presence in Gaza and the West Bank was an illegal occupation and had been since 1967. Israel ignored a UN order to evacuate all territory captured during the Six-Day War (including the Golan Heights, taken from Syria).
- Frontiers were referred to as 'provisional'. Palestinians suspected that Sharon's idea was to have a weak Palestinian state made up of a number of enclaves separated from each other by Israeli territory, and therefore easily dominated by the Israelis.
- There was the thorny problem of Israeli settlements. The 'road map' mentioned the dismantling of 'illegal' settlements built since March 2001, which numbered about 60. This implied that all the earlier settlements – almost 200 of them, housing over 450 000 people, half of them in or near East Jerusalem, the rest in the West Bank and Gaza – were legal. But these were also arguably illegal, having been built on occupied territory. There was no mention in the 'road map' of these being dismantled.
- There was no reference to the massive security wall, 347 km long, being built by the Israelis in the West Bank, stretching from north to south, and looping round to include some of the larger Israeli settlements. The wall cut through Palestinian lands and olive groves, in some places cutting the Palestinians off from the farms which provided their livelihood. It was estimated that when the wall was finished, 300 000 Palestinians would be trapped in their townships, unable to get to their land.

- Above all there was the question of the refugees and their dream of returning to their pre-1948 homelands, a desire formulated in a number of UN resolutions. On the Israeli side, they believed that if the Palestinian dream became reality, that would destroy their own particular dream – the Jewish state.

In January 2004, Sharon announced that if no progress was made towards a negotiated peace, Israel would go ahead and impose its own solution. They would withdraw from some settlements and relocate the Jewish communities. Frontiers would be redefined to create a separate state of Palestine, but it would be smaller than that envisaged in the 'road map'. The situation was thrown into chaos once again in March 2004 when the Israelis assassinated Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder and leader of Hamas.

Later that month Sharon announced his new unilateral solution: the Israelis would dismantle their settlements in the Gaza Strip, but keep control of all but a token four of the settlements on the West Bank. Although this was a fundamental shift away from the 'road map' by the Israelis, it received unqualified support from President Bush, who said that it was unrealistic to expect a full Israeli withdrawal from land occupied during the 1967 war, and equally unrealistic for Palestinian refugees to expect to return 'home'. Predictably this caused complete outrage across the Arab world; tensions were further inflamed in April 2004 when the Israelis assassinated Dr al-Rantissi, Sheikh Yassin's successor, and warned that Yasser Arafat could be the next target. This provoked a violent response from Palestinian militants; the Israelis retaliated by launching an attack on the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza, killing some 40 people, including children.

Yasser Arafat appeared to be extending an olive branch when he told an Israeli newspaper that he recognized Israel's right to remain a Jewish state and was prepared to accept the return of only a fraction of the Palestinian refugees. This offer was unpopular with Palestinian militants, and there was no positive response from the Israelis.

Meanwhile the International Court of Justice at The Hague had been considering the legality of the West Bank security wall; the Palestinians were delighted when the court ruled (July 2004) that the barrier was illegal, and that the Israelis should demolish it and compensate the victims. However, Prime Minister Sharon rejected the court's decision, saying that Israel had a sacred right to fight terrorists in whatever ways were necessary. The Israelis showed further defiance with an announcement that they planned to build a new settlement near Jerusalem, which would surround Palestinian East Jerusalem and make it impossible for East Jerusalem to become the capital of a Palestinian state. This violated Israel's agreement in the 'road map' not to build any more settlements; the announcement provoked condemnation from the rest of the world, except the USA, which gave tacit approval.

The situation changed with the death of Yasser Arafat in December 2004. The Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen), who was the leader of Fatah, won a decisive victory in the election for a new president, taking about 70 per cent of the votes (January 2005). He was a moderate who had constantly opposed violence; consequently President Bush of the USA, who had refused to deal with Arafat, signalled his willingness to meet the new president, and urged both the Palestinians and Israel to reduce tension and move towards peace. Later in 2005 the Israelis obligingly withdrew their troops from Gaza, along with thousands of Jews who had settled in the territory. However, Israel still controlled the Gaza Strip's land borders as well as its territorial waters and its airspace, so that it was effectively isolated, except for its short frontier with Egypt.

By the end of 2005 Abbas was seen as weak and ineffective by all sides – Palestinians, Israelis and Americans. *In January 2006 Hamas won a majority in the Palestinian elections for the legislature, with 74 seats to 58 for the opposition* (mainly supporters of the more moderate Fatah). The Israelis announced that no further peace talks could take place

while ‘terrorists’ were in power. In July 2006 the Israelis unsuccessfully tried to destroy Hezbollah, which had just ambushed an Israeli patrol on their frontier with southern Lebanon. Meanwhile, the more moderate Palestinian party, Fatah, refused to accept the January election result and violence broke out; by the spring of 2007 something approaching a Palestinian civil war between Fatah and Hamas supporters seemed to be under way. There is evidence that the USA was financing Fatah and Abbas, who was still president, in the hope of destroying Hamas. Another complicating factor was that Egypt distrusted Hamas, which was an offshoot of the Muslim Brothers, Egypt’s largest opposition group to President Mubarak. By the end of 2007 Palestine was split in two: the West Bank ruled by Fatah, and the Gaza Strip ruled by Hamas. The two areas were separated by Israeli territory and communication between the two was often difficult (see Map 10.3). However, in November 2007, in an attempt to get the peace process moving again, Abbas met Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert in Annapolis (USA). Bur Hamas was not invited to take part in the talks, and so, not surprisingly, no progress was made.

Israel refused to negotiate with Hamas, and did all they could to destabilize the Hamas regime in Gaza, although they had been democratically elected. The blockade of Gaza, which had been intensified since Hamas took over, aimed to prevent the entry of goods of all types, including food, and to cut fuel supplies. Early in 2008 a group of aid agencies reported that the population of the strip were having to survive on less than a quarter of the volume of supplies they had been importing at the end of 2005. A six-month truce was agreed beginning in June 2008 – Hamas promised to stop firing rockets into Israel, while Israel undertook to ease its stranglehold on Gaza. However, by the end of 2008 the situation in Gaza had not improved; there was very little evidence of a relaxation in the blockade; in fact conditions were said to be worse than at any time since the Israeli occupation began in 1967. Fuel shortages and lack of spare parts were having a disastrous effect on treatment of sewage, water supply and medical facilities; in short, Gaza was in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. Even a retired general of the Israeli Defence Force (Gaza Division), Shmuel Zakai, was critical of his own government. He claimed that they had made a central error by failing to take advantage of the truce to improve the economic conditions of the Palestinians. ‘You cannot just land blows,’ he said, ‘leave the Palestinians in Gaza in the economic distress they’re in, and expect that Hamas will sit around and do nothing.’ The Israelis also violated the truce in November 2008 when troops entered Gaza and killed six members of Hamas. In response Hamas launched Qassam rockets and Grad missiles into Israel.

According to Henry Siegman, formerly a director of the American Jewish Congress, at this point Hamas ‘offered to extend the truce, but only on condition that Israel ended its blockade. Israel refused. It could have met its obligations to protect its citizens by agreeing to ease the blockade, but it didn’t even try.’ In fact, the opposite happened: the Israelis began a propaganda campaign against Hamas ‘terrorism’, and closed Gaza to journalists. *On 27 December 2008 they launched a major air attack on Gaza targeting weapons depots; a week later ground troops invaded the territory.* After 22 days the Israelis called a ceasefire. But damage from the aerial bombardment was indiscriminate and disastrous: 15 out of 27 hospitals were put out of action or destroyed, together with schools, police stations, mosques, factories and Hamas government buildings. About 10 000 small family farms were destroyed, which badly disrupted food supplies over the next few months. Out of 110 primary healthcare facilities, 43 were badly damaged. Altogether over 1000 Palestinians were killed and about 5000 injured; 50 000 were left homeless, half a million had no running water and a million were left without electricity. Much of the Gaza Strip was left in ruins. On the other side, 13 Israelis were killed. Amnesty International later confirmed that the Israelis had used white phosphorous shells made in the USA. These cause fires that are extremely difficult to extinguish: when the UN compound in Gaza City was hit, the fires destroyed hundreds of tons of emergency food and medicines which were about to be distributed to hospitals and medical centres.

Following the ceasefire, the blockade of Gaza continued, although the Israelis did allow in some humanitarian medical aid. However, the Red Cross reported that the blockade was still damaging the economy and that there was a shortage of basic medical supplies. Israel justified the attacks and the continued blockade on the need to protect their people from rockets. But Henry Siegman claims that this is a lie:

> it cannot be said that Israel launched its assaults to protect its citizens from rockets. It did so to protect its right to continue the strangulation of Gaza's population. Everyone seems to have forgotten that Hamas declared an end to suicide bombings and rocket fire when it decided to join the Palestinian political process, and largely stuck to it for more than a year.

The Israelis blithely ignored the mounting international criticism flooding in from most parts of the world (except from the USA), calling on them to ease or lift the blockade. In July 2010 British prime minister David Cameron warned: 'humanitarian goods and people must flow in both directions. Gaza cannot and must not be allowed to remain a prison camp'; to which the Israeli embassy in London retorted: 'the people of Gaza are the prisoners of the terrorist organisation Hamas. The situation in Gaza is the direct result of Hamas rules and priorities.' Eventually it was Egypt which relented and partially opened its frontier with Gaza, but only for people, not supplies. In February 2011 the UN reported that Israel had co-operated to some extent between January 2009 and June 2010 by allowing fuel and cooking gas into Gaza, but added that this had not resulted in any significant improvement in people's livelihoods.

Then in May 2011 there was a dramatic change in the situation: following months of protest demonstrations and increasing violence, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt resigned. Not long before this, US president Obama had described him as 'a stalwart ally, in many respects, to the United States … a force for stability and good' in the Middle East. Yet many people had viewed Mubarak as one of the most brutal dictators in the region. One of his main opponents was the Muslim Brotherhood, who had close associations with Hamas. Egypt immediately opened its border with Gaza completely. There was great rejoicing as the people of Gaza began to look forward to better times ahead. But this was somewhat premature: in November 2012 Israel launched a series of air attacks on Gaza, claiming that their action was in retaliation for hundreds of rockets recently fired from Gaza into Israel. Lasting for eight days, the Israeli attacks killed over 160 Palestinians, including many children, and destroyed several military sites in Gaza. Five Israelis were killed. Egypt's president, Mohamed Morsi, helped to broker a ceasefire. Both sides claimed victory, but there was still no commitment by Israel to end their blockade of Gaza. Until that point was reached, it seemed likely that Hamas would continue its rocket campaign.

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Chapter

11 The new world order and the war against global terrorism

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

When communism collapsed in eastern Europe and the USSR broke up in 1991, the Cold War came to an end. *The USA was left as the world's only superpower*. Following its victory over communism, the USA was full of confidence and pride in the superiority of its way of life and its institutions. Optimists thought that the world could now look forward to a period of peace and harmony, during which the USA, which saw itself as the land of freedom and benevolence, would lead the rest of the world forward, wherever necessary, into democracy and prosperity. In addition, wherever necessary, the USA would act as the world's policeman, keeping 'rogue states' under control and making them toe the line. Francis Fukuyama, professor of political economy at Johns Hopkins University, even argued that the world had reached 'the end of history', in the sense that History, seen as the development of human societies through various forms of government, had reached its climax in modern liberal democracy and market-oriented capitalism.

However, the new world order turned out to be quite different. Much of the rest of the world did not wish to be led anywhere by the USA, and disagreed with the USA's world-view. Since it was so powerful both militarily and economically, it was difficult for small countries to challenge the USA in conventional ways. To the extremists, it seemed that terrorism was the only way to strike at the USA and its allies.

Terrorism was nothing new – anarchists were responsible for many assassinations around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries there had been many terrorist organizations, but these were mostly localized, carrying out their campaigns in their own areas. There were, for example, ETA, which wanted a Basque state completely independent of Spain; and the IRA, which wanted Northern Ireland united with the Irish Republic.

It was in the 1970s that terrorists began to act outside their own territories. For example, in 1972 Arab terrorists killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics; and there was a series of bomb explosions on aircraft. In the 1980s, it became clear that the USA was the chief target:

- there was an attack on the American embassy in Beirut (Lebanon) in 1983;
- an American airliner flying from Frankfurt to New York crashed onto the Scottish town of Lockerbie after a bomb had exploded on board (1988);
- a bomb exploded in the World Trade Center in New York in February 1993;
- US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were attacked in 1998;
- there was an attack on the American battleship *Cole* in port at Aden in the Yemen (2000).

The culmination of this campaign was the terrible events of 11 September 2001 when the World Trade Center in New York was completely destroyed (see Illus. 12.1). The blame for this attack was placed on al-Qaeda (meaning 'the Base'), an Arab organization led by

Osama bin Laden, which was campaigning against Western or anti-Islamic interests. US president George W. Bush immediately announced 'a declaration of war on terrorism'. His aims were to overthrow the Taliban (students) regime in Afghanistan, which was thought to be aiding and abetting al-Qaeda, to capture Osama bin Laden and to destroy al-Qaeda. Bush also threatened to attack and overthrow any regime that encouraged or harboured terrorists. First on the list was to be Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and action was also threatened against Iran and North Korea – three states which, according to Bush, formed an 'axis of evil'.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was quickly overthrown (October 2001) and a national government led by Hamid Kharzai was put in place, supported by NATO troops. The USA, with British help, then moved on to deal with Iraq, where *Saddam Hussein was also overthrown (April–May 2003)* and later captured. Although these regimes were removed relatively easily, it proved much more difficult to replace them with viable, stable administrations which could bring peace and prosperity to their troubled countries. In Afghanistan the Taliban soon regrouped and in 2003 they began a new insurgency. NATO troops and the native Afghan army struggled to control the insurgency, but the violence continued and in 2012 Afghanistan was still in a state of civil war. And so the 'war on terror' continued.

At the same time there was increasing tension between the Islamic republic of Iran and the West. Since 1979 when the American-backed regime of the Shah Reza Pahlevi was overthrown in the Islamic revolution, Iran had been viewed with suspicion, partly because they were pursuing a nuclear programme. Although the Iranians insisted that their nuclear power was intended only for peaceful purposes – mainly to produce electricity – the West was convinced that they were planning to manufacture nuclear weapons. By early 2012 there was talk of American and Israeli pre-emptive strikes to destroy Iran's nuclear plants.

Meanwhile sensational events were taking place in other part of the Middle East and across North Africa. Beginning in Tunisia in December 2010, a series of anti-government protests and demonstrations quickly spread through the entire region. In little over a year the governments of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen were overthrown and several other countries were forced to introduce important reforms and improvements, in a movement that became known as the 'Arab Spring'.

11.1 THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Soon after the US 'victory' in the Cold War, various American spokesmen announced that the USA was looking forward to a new era of peace and international co-operation. They implied that the USA – the world's only superpower – all-powerful and unchallengeable – was now committed to good works; support for international justice, liberty and human rights; the eradication of poverty; and the spread of education, health and democracy throughout the world. Understandably, Americans were full of pride in their country's achievements; in 1997 David Rothkopf, a minister in the Clinton administration, wrote: 'The Americans should not deny the fact that of all the nations in the history of the world, theirs is the most just, the most tolerant and the best model for the future.'

And yet, instead of being universally loved and admired, the USA, or rather US governments, ended up being hated so violently in certain quarters that people were driven to commit the most terrible acts of terrorism in protest against the USA and its system. How did this happen? *How did the post-Cold War era*, *which seemed so full of hope*, *turn out to be so full of hatred and horror?* In simple terms, there were millions of people in many countries of the world who did not share the advantages of the prosperous American lifestyle; nor did they see much evidence that the USA was genuinely trying to do anything to narrow the gap between the poor and the wealthy, or to fight for justice and human rights.

Many American writers were aware of the dangers of this situation. Nicholas Guyatt, in his book *Another American Century*, published in 2000, pointed out that

> many people around the world are frustrated by the complacency and impenetrability of the US, and by the fact that the apparent absence of political solutions to this (such as a genuinely multilateral and independent United Nations) is likely to drive many towards radical and extreme measures … [there are] large and dangerous pockets of resentment towards the US around the world, grounded not in fundamentalism or insanity but in a real perception of the imbalance of power, and a real frustration at the impotence of political means of change.

'As long as the US remains insulated from the effects of its actions', he concluded, 'it will have little sense of the true desperation they produce in others.'

What were these actions of the USA that caused such desperation in others? Clearly there was a complex combination of actions and policies which led to such extreme reactions.

- *US foreign policy continued along the same interventionist course as during the Cold War*. For example, in December 1989 at least 2000 civilians were killed when US forces invaded and bombed Panama. This was an operation designed to arrest Manuel Noriega, the Panamanian military leader who was the power behind the presidents of Panama during the 1980s. He had worked for the CIA and had been backed by the US government until 1987, when he was accused of drug trafficking and money laundering. The heavy-handed US operation resulted in his capture and removal to the USA to stand trial. The Organization of American States proposed a resolution 'to deeply regret the military intervention in Panama'. The resolution was approved by a vote of 20 to1, the one being the USA.
- During the 1990s the Americans helped to suppress left-wing movements in Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. In 1999 they took part in the controversial bombing of Serbia. Twice – in 1989 and 2001 – American agents intervened in the Nicaraguan elections, the first time to defeat the left-wing government, the second time to prevent the left returning to power. This sort of policy was bound to cause resentment, especially now that it could not be justified as part of the campaign against the advance of global communism. In the words of William Blum (in *Rogue State*): 'The enemy was, and remains, any government or movement, or even individual, that stands in the way of the expansion of the American Empire.'
- At other times *the USA failed to intervene in situations where international opinion hoped for a decisive US role*. In Rwanda in 1994 the USA was reluctant to play a full part, since no direct US interests were involved and intervention on a sufficiently large scale would have been expensive. Because of the delays, some half a million people were massacred. As Nicholas Guyatt puts it: 'Reluctant to give up its central role in world affairs but unwilling to commit troops and money for UN operations, the USA atrophied the cause of peacekeeping just as the situation in Rwanda required a flexible and dynamic response.' The other main example of US failure was the Arab–Israeli conflict: although the USA became involved in trying to bring peace, they were clearly on the side of Israel. George W. Bush refused to deal with Yasser Arafat, regarding him as nothing but a terrorist. This US failure to bring about a just settlement of the conflict is probably the main reason for the bitter Arab and Muslim hostility.
- *The USA often failed to support the United Nations*. In 1984 for example, President Ronald Reagan talked about the importance of international law and order: 'without law', he said, 'there can only be chaos and disorder'. However, the previous day

he had rejected the verdict of the International Court of Justice which condemned the USA for its unlawful use of force by its mining of harbours in Nicaragua. Later the court ordered the USA to pay compensation to Nicaragua, but the government refused and increased its financial support to the mercenaries who were trying to destabilize the democratically elected Nicaraguan government. The UN was unable to enforce its decision.

- The USA had a long history of vetoing Security Council resolutions and opposing General Assembly resolutions. A few examples demonstrate the US attitude. In 1985 the USA was the only country to vote against a resolution proposing new policies for improving the safeguarding of human rights (voting was 130 for, 1 against). Similarly in 1987, the USA was the only member to vote against a resolution aimed at strengthening communication services in the Third World (voting was 140 for, 1 against). In 1996, at a World Food Summit organized by the UN, the USA refused to endorse a general view that it was everyone's right 'to have access to safe and nutritious food'. As Noam Chomsky succinctly puts it (in *Hegemony or Survival*): 'When the UN fails to serve as an instrument of American unilateralism on issues of elite concern, it is dismissed.' The USA even voted against UN proposals on the control of terrorism, presumably because it wanted to fight terrorism in its own way. All this – before 11 September – could only result in a weakening of the UN and of international law. In the words of Michael Byers, 'international law as applied by the US increasingly bears little relationship to international law as understood anywhere else … It is possible that … the US is in fact attempting to create new, exceptional rules for itself alone.'
- *President George W. Bush was less than enthusiastic about some of the agreements entered into by previous administrations*. During his first year in office – and before 11 September – he rejected the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, withdrew from the 1997 Kyoto Protocols on climate change, halted the new diplomatic contacts with North Korea and refused to co-operate in discussions about the control of chemical weapons.
- *The US economy was so powerful that decisions taken in Washington and New York had worldwide repercussions*. With the increasing globalization of the world's economy, American companies had interests all over the world. The Americans kept firm control over the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, so that states applying for loans had to make sure that their internal policies were acceptable to the USA. In 1995 the new president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, announced that he wanted the Bank to do more to promote debt relief, good government, education and health in the Third World. But Washington opposed this, arguing for strict austerity. In fact, according to Will Hutton, 'the international financial system has been shaped to extend US financial and political power, not to promote the world public good'. By the end of 2002 it was clear that the USA was pursuing what some observers described as 'an imperial grand strategy' leading to a new world order in which it 'runs the show'.

11.2 THE RISE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM

(a) How do we define 'terrorism'?

Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, in their recent book *Worlds in Collision*, offer this definition:

> Terrorism is a method of political action that uses violence (or deliberately produces fear) against civilians and against civilian infrastructure in order to influence

behaviour, to inflict punishment or to exact revenge. For the perpetrators, the point is to make the target group afraid of today, afraid of tomorrow and afraid of each other. Terrorism is an act, not an ideology. Its instruments are assassination, mass murder, hijacking, bombing, kidnapping and intimidation. Such acts can be committed by states as well as private groups.

There are problems with any definition of terrorism. For example, are people engaged in a legitimate struggle for independence, like the Mau Mau in Kenya and the African National Congress in South Africa, terrorists or revolutionaries and freedom fighters? In the 1960s Nelson Mandela was regarded as a terrorist by the white governments of South Africa and kept in jail for 27 years; now he is respected and revered by both blacks and whites all over the world. What about Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader? President Bush refused to meet him because, according to the Americans, he was nothing but a terrorist. Yet when the Israeli government carried out similar attacks to those perpetrated by the Palestinians, this was classified not as terrorism, but as legitimate actions of a government against terrorism. Clearly it depends which side you are on, and which side wins in the end.

(b) Terrorist groups

Some of the best-known terrorist organizations were based in the Middle East:

The *Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)* was one of the earliest groups to make itself felt. Formed in 1974, it was an offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was thought not to be sufficiently aggressive. The ANO was committed to a completely independent Palestinian state; it had bases in Lebanon and Palestine (in some of the refugee camps) and it drew support from Syria, Sudan, and at first from Libya. It was responsible for operations in about 20 different countries, including attacks on airports in Rome and Vienna (1985), and a number of aircraft hijackings. Since the early 1990s, the ANO has been less active.

Hezbollah (Party of God), also known as *Islamic Jihad (Holy War)*, was formed in Lebanon in 1982 after the Israeli invasion. Mainly Shia Muslims, they claimed to be inspired by the Ayatollah Khomeini, the ruler of Iran. They aimed to follow his example by setting up an Islamic state in Lebanon; they also wanted to expel the Israelis from all the occupied territories in Palestine. Hezbollah was thought to be responsible for several attacks on the US embassy in Beirut during the 1980s, and for seizing a number of Western hostages in 1987, including Terry Waite, a special peace envoy sent by the Archbishop of Canterbury. In the 1990s they began to extend their sphere of operations, attacking targets in Argentina – the Israeli embassy (1992) and later an Israeli cultural centre (1994).

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) was formed in 1987 with the aim of setting up an independent Islamic state of Palestine. It tried to combine armed resistance to Israel with political activity, by running candidates for some of the Palestinian Authority elections. Hamas has massive support in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; in the last few years, it has specialized in suicide bomb attacks against Israeli targets.

Al-Qaeda (the Base) was the most famous terrorist group during the early years of the twenty-first century. Consisting mainly of Sunni Muslims, it was formed towards the end of the 1980s as part of the struggle to expel the Soviet forces which had invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Since this could be portrayed as part of the Cold War, al-Qaeda was actually financed and trained by the USA, among other Western countries. After the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan was completed (February 1989), al-Qaeda extended its horizons. It began a general campaign in support of the establishment of Islamic governments. The special target was the non-religious conservative regime in Saudi Arabia, Osama bin Laden's homeland, which was supported by the USA and garrisoned

by American troops. Al-Qaeda's aim was to force the Americans to withdraw their troops so that an Islamic regime would be able to come to power. A secondary aim was to bring an end to US support for Israel. The organization is thought to have around 5000 members, with cells in many countries.

Perhaps the best-known terrorist group outside the Middle East has been *the Tamil Tigers* in Sri Lanka. They were Hindus living in the north and east of Sri Lanka, whereas the majority of the island's population were Buddhist. The Tigers campaigned since the early 1980s for an independent homeland, using suicide bombings, assassinations of leading politicians, and attacks on public buildings and Buddhist shrines. By the 1990s they had over 10 000 troops and the struggle had reached civil-war proportions. Their most notorious action was the assassination of the Indian prime minister, Rajiv Ghandi, in India in 1991. A truce was arranged in 2001, and although it was broken several times, by 2003 there were encouraging signs that a peaceful settlement could be found.

Probably the most successful terrorist group was *the African National Congress (ANC)* in South Africa. Originally formed in 1912, it only adopted violent methods in the early 1960s when *apartheid* became more brutal. After a long campaign, the white supremacist government eventually succumbed to pressure from world opinion as well as from the ANC. Nelson Mandela was released (1990), and multiracial elections were held (1994). Mandela, the former 'terrorist', became the first black president of South Africa. There have been scores of other organizations, for example *the Tupamaru Revolutionary Movement* in Peru, which aims to rid the country of US influence; *the Islamic Group* in Algeria, which aims to set up an Islamic state in place of the existing non-religious government; and *the National Liberation Army* in Bolivia, which aims to rid the country of US influence.

(c) Terrorism becomes global and anti-American

It was in the early 1970s that terrorist groups began to operate outside their own countries. In 1972 there was the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, carried out by a pro-Palestinian group calling itself Black September. Gradually it became clear that the main target of the outrages was the USA and its interests. After the downfall of the US-backed Shah of Iran early in 1979, there was a great wave of anti-American feeling in the region. In November 1979 a large army of several thousand Iranian students attacked the American embassy in the capital, Tehran, and seized 52 Americans, who were held hostage for almost 15 months. The demands of the country's new ruler, the Ayatollah Khomeini, included handing over the ex-Shah so that he could face trial in Iran, and an acknowledgement by the USA of its guilt for all its interference in Iran prior to 1979. Only when the USA agreed to release $8 million of frozen Iranian assets were the hostages allowed to return home. This incident was seen as a national humiliation by the Americans and showed the rest of the world that there were limits to the power of the USA. But at least the hostages were not harmed; after that, the anti-American acts became more violent.

- In 1983 the Middle East became the focus of attention as resentment grew at the extent of American interests and interventions in the region. Especially unpopular was US support of Israel, which had invaded the Lebanon in 1982. In April 1983 a truck carrying a huge bomb was driven into the US embassy in Beirut, the Lebanese capital. The building collapsed, killing 63 people. In October 1983 a similar attack was carried out on the headquarters of the US marines in Beirut, killing 242 people. The same day another suicide lorry was driven into a French military base in Beirut; this time 58 French soldiers were killed. In December, action switched to Kuwait City, where a lorry packed with explosives was driven into the US embassy, killing

four people. All four attacks were organized by Islamic Jihad, probably backed by Syria and Iran.

- Shortly before Christmas 1988 an American airliner carrying 259 people en route for New York blew up and crashed onto the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing all those on board and 11 people on the ground. No organization claimed responsibility but suspicion fell on Iran and Syria. Later it shifted to Libya; eventually the Libyan government handed over two men suspected of planting the bomb. In January 2000 both were tried in a Scottish court sitting in special session in Holland; one was found guilty of killing the 270 victims and sentenced to life imprisonment, the other man was acquitted. However, many people believe that the conviction was dubious – the evidence was extremely thin – and that Syria and Iran were the real culprits.
- In February 1993 a bomb exploded in the basement of the World Trade Center in New York, killing six people and injuring several hundred.
- American interests in Africa were the next target: on the same day – 7 August 1998 – bomb attacks were launched against the US embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania). In total, 252 people were killed and several thousand injured; but the vast majority of the victims were Kenyans, and only 12 of those killed were Americans. The Americans were convinced that al-Qaeda was responsible for the attacks, especially when the Islamic Army Organization, which was thought to be closely connected to Osama bin Laden, issued a statement claiming that the bombings were in revenge for injustices which the USA had committed against Muslim states; the statement also threatened that this was just a beginning – there would be even more attacks and the USA would meet a 'black fate'.
- President Bill Clinton ordered immediate retaliation – the Americans fired cruise missiles at complexes in Afghanistan and Sudan, which were said to be producing chemical weapons. However, this tactic seemed to backfire. One of the sites bombed turned out to be an ordinary pharmaceutical factory, and there was a violent anti-American reaction throughout the Middle East.
- October 2000 brought a new sort of terrorist action – the attack on the American destroyer *Cole*, which was refuelling in the port of Aden (in Yemen) on its way to the Persian Gulf. Two men rammed a small boat packed with explosives into the side of the ship, apparently hoping to sink it. They failed, but the explosion did blow a large hole in the *Cole*'s side, killing 17 sailors and injuring many more. The damage was easily repaired, but once again it was a humiliation that the world's supposedly most powerful nation had been unable to defend its property adequately in hostile regions. The message from the Islamic states was clear: 'We do not want you here.' Would the USA take heed and change its policies?

(d) Has the USA been guilty of terrorism?

If we accept that a definition of 'terrorism' should include acts committed by states as well as by individuals and groups, then we have to ask the question: which states have been guilty of terrorism, in the sense that their governments have been responsible for some or even all the terrorist activities mentioned – assassinations, mass murders, hijackings, bombings, kidnappings and intimidation? The list of candidates is a long one; the most obvious must be Nazi Germany, the USSR under Stalin, Communist China, the South African *apartheid* regime, Chile during the Pinochet regime, Cambodia under Pol Pot and Milošević's Serbia. But what about the shocking claim that the USA has also been guilty of terrorism? The accusation has been made not just by Arabs and Latin American left-wingers, but by respected Western commentators and by Americans themselves. It is linked to the question of why there have been so many terrorist acts directed against the USA.

Twenty years ago very few people in the West would have thought of asking such a question. But since the end of the Cold War, and especially since the 11 September attacks, there has been a radical reappraisal by a number of writers of the US role in international affairs since the end of the Second World War. Their motive in most cases is a genuine desire to find explanations as to why US government policies have aroused so much hostility. According to William Blum in his book *Rogue State*:

> From 1945 until the end of the century, the United States attempted to overthrow more than 40 foreign governments, and to crush more than 30 populist–nationalist movements struggling against intolerable regimes. In the process, the US caused the end of life for several million people, and condemned many millions more to a life of agony and despair.

Noam Chomsky (a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) pointed out (in his book *Rogue States*) that often 'terrorist' acts against the USA were committed in retaliation for US actions. For example, it seems highly likely that the destruction of the American airliner over Lockerbie in 1988 was a retaliation for the shooting down of an Iranian airliner by the Americans, with the loss of 290 lives, a few months earlier. Similar American acts which precipitated retaliation were the bombings of Libya in 1986 and the shooting down of two Libyan aircraft in 1989; in these instances, however, the Americans could claim that their actions were in retaliation for earlier Libyan outrages. One of the most horrific acts of terrorism was a car bomb placed outside a mosque in Beirut in March 1985. It was timed to explode as worshippers left after Friday prayers: 80 innocent people were killed, including many women and children, and over 200 were seriously injured. The target was a suspected Arab terrorist, but he was unhurt. It is now known that the attack was organized by the CIA with help from British intelligence. Sadly, these were the sorts of action which were likely to turn ordinary Muslims into 'fanatical' terrorists. In 1996, Amnesty International reported:

> Throughout the world, on any given day, a man, woman or child is likely to be displaced, tortured, killed or 'disappeared', at the hands of governments or armed political groups. More often than not, the United States shares the blame.

Lloyd Pettiford and David Harding (in *Terrorism*: *The New World War*) conclude that American foreign policies must take much of the blame for the increase in terrorism, since 'the US seems totally determined to ensure that the whole world is opened up to its unrestricted access and that any alternative form of society be regarded as strictly against the rules'. Noam Chomsky claims (in *Who are the Global Terrorists?*) that Washington created

> an international terror network of unprecedented scale and employed it worldwide with lethal and long-lasting effects. In Central America, terror guided and supported by the US reached its most extreme levels. … It is hardly surprising that Washington's call for support in its war of revenge for September 11 had little resonance in Latin America.

11.3 11 SEPTEMBER 2001 AND THE 'WAR ON TERROR'

(a) The 11 September attacks

Early in the morning of 11 September 2001, four airliners on internal flights in the USA were hijacked. The first one was deliberately crashed into the 110-storey North Tower of

the World Trade Center in New York. A quarter of an hour later the second plane crashed into the South Tower; about an hour after the impact the entire South Tower collapsed into a vast heap of rubble, severely damaging surrounding buildings; after another 25 minutes the North Tower also disintegrated. In the meantime a third plane was flown into the Pentagon, the building near Washington that housed the US Department of Defense, and the fourth plane missed its intended target and crashed in a rural area of Pennsylvania, not far from Pittsburgh. It was the most stunning atrocity ever experienced on US soil: it cost the lives of around 2800 people in the World Trade Center, well over a hundred in the Pentagon building, and some 200 who were passengers on the aircraft, including the hijackers. Television cameras filmed the second plane flying into the South Tower and the collapse of the towers, and these images, shown over and over again, only added to the horror and disbelief around the world at what was happening. Nor was it only Americans who were killed: it emerged that citizens of over forty foreign countries were among the victims, either in the buildings or as passengers on the aircraft.

Although no organization claimed responsibility for the attacks, the US government assumed that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were guilty. Certainly it must have been carried out by educated professionals with considerable financial backing, like the members of al-Qaeda, who were known to number perhaps 5000 highly-trained activists. Recovering quickly from the initial shock, President Bush announced that the USA would hunt down and punish not only the perpetrators of what he called 'these acts of war', but also those who supported and harboured them. The outrages were condemned by most of the world's governments, although there were reports of Palestinians and other Muslim groups celebrating at the humiliation of the USA. President Saddam Hussein of Iraq was reported as saying that the USA was 'reaping the thorns of its foreign policy'.

(b) Bush and the 'war against terrorism'

The American government immediately tried to build on the worldwide sympathy in order to create a coalition to fight terrorism. NATO condemned the outrages and stated that an attack on one member state would be treated as an attack on all 19 members; each country would be required to assist, if necessary. Within a short time a coalition of states was put together to enable the terrorists' assets to be frozen and to collect wide-ranging intelligence; some of the countries promised to help with military action against the terrorists and against the Taliban government of Afghanistan, which was accused of sheltering al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden. Some of Bush's statements during this period were disturbing to other governments. For example, he stated that countries were 'either with us or against us' – implying that the right to remain neutral did not exist. He also spoke of 'an axis of evil' in the world, which would have to be dealt with; the 'evil' states were Iraq, Iran and North Korea. This opened up the possibility of a long series of military operations, with the USA playing the part of 'world policeman' or 'playground bully', depending on which side you were on.

This caused some alarm, and not only in the three states named. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany stated that although Germany was prepared to 'make appropriate military facilities' available to the USA and its allies, he did not consider that there was a state of war with any particular country; and he added that 'we are not in a war with the Islamic world either'. This cautious response was because of doubts about whether a direct attack on Afghanistan was justified in international law. As Michael Byers (an expert in international law at Duke University, North Carolina) explains:

> in order to maintain the coalition against terrorism, the US military response had to be necessary and proportionate. This meant that the strikes had to be carefully

targeted against those believed to be responsible for the atrocities in New York and Washington. But if the US singled out Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda as its targets, it would have run up against the widely held view that terrorist attacks, in and of themselves, did not justify military responses against sovereign states.

It was for this reason that the USA widened its claim of self-defence to include the Taliban government of Afghanistan, which was accused of supporting the terrorist acts. Accordingly, the UN Security Council passed two resolutions which did not authorize military action under the UN Charter, but allowed it *as the right of self-defence in customary international law*. The USA then issued an ultimatum to the Taliban demanding that they hand over bin Laden and some of his colleagues directly to the US authorities. When this was rejected by the Taliban, the scene was set for the use of force, though Mullah Zaeef, one of the Taliban leaders, issued a press release strongly condemning the attacks and calling for those responsible to be brought to justice. No doubt he knew what to expect when he added: 'We want America to be patient and careful in their actions.'

(c) Background to the attack on Afghanistan

The history of the previous 30 years in Afghanistan had been extremely violent and confused. In 1978 a left-wing government seized power and began a modernization programme. However, in a country where Islamic authority was strong, changes such as equal status for men and women and the secularization of society were seen as an affront to Islam. Opposition was fierce, and civil war soon broke out. In 1979 Soviet troops entered the country to support the government; they were afraid that if the regime was overthrown by a fundamentalist Muslim revolution, like the one in Iran in January 1979, this would stir up the millions of Muslims who were Soviet citizens and destabilize those republics with substantial Muslim populations.

The USSR expected a short campaign, but the US government treated it as part of the Cold War and sent extensive aid to the Muslim opposition in Afghanistan. There were several rival Muslim groups, but they all worked together – known collectively as the *Mujahideen* – to drive out the Russians. By 1986 the Mujahideen (meaning 'those who wage *jihad*') were receiving large amounts of weaponry via Pakistan from the USA and China, the most important of which were ground-to-air missiles, which had a devastating effect on the Afghan and Soviet air forces. One of the organizations fighting with the Mujahideen was al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, who, ironically, received training, weapons and cash from the USA.

Eventually Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, realized that he was in a similar situation to the one in which the Americans had found themselves in Vietnam. He had to acknowledge that the war in Afghanistan could not be won, and by February 1989 all Soviet troops had been withdrawn. Left to fend for itself, the socialist government of Afghanistan survived until 1992 when it was finally overthrown. The Mujahideen formed a coalition government, but the country soon fell into total chaos as the rival factions fought for power. During the later 1990s the faction known as 'the Taliban' (meaning 'students') gradually took control of the country, driving out rival groups area by area. The Taliban were a conservative Muslim faction made up of Pashtuns, the ethnic group in the south-east of the country, especially in the province of Kandahar. By the end of 2000 they controlled most of the country except the north-west, where they were opposed by the rival ethnic groups – Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazara – known as the 'Northern Alliance'.

The Taliban regime aroused international disapproval because of its extreme policies.

- Women were almost totally excluded from public life, and were prevented from continuing as teachers and doctors and in other professions. Harsh criminal punishments were introduced. For example, women were often publicly beaten for showing their ankles. Mass executions took place in public in the Ghazi football stadium.
- Its cultural policies seemed unreasonable: for example, music was banned. There was worldwide dismay when the regime ordered the destruction of two huge statues of Buddha carved into rocks and dating from the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Cultural experts regarded them as unique treasures, but the Taliban blew them up, claiming that they were offensive to Islam.
- The government allowed the country to be used as a refuge and training ground for Islamic militants, including Osama bin Laden.

Because of a combination of the ravages of years of civil war and three consecutive years of drought, the economy was in ruins. There were severe food shortages as refugees, who could no longer sustain themselves on the land, flocked into the cities. Yet when the UN tried to distribute food supplies in Kabul, the capital, the government closed their offices down. They objected to foreign influence and to the fact that Afghan women were helping with the relief work.

Very few states recognized the Taliban regime, and its unpopularity provided a boost to the American plan to use force against it. On the other hand the Taliban succeeded in eliminating much of the corruption endemic in Afghan ruling circles, and they restored security on the roads. Writing in 2010, a British journalist, James Fergusson, who spent 14 years in Afghanistan, argued that

> the Taliban were never as uniformly wicked as they were routinely made out to be – and nor are they now. … The Taliban made some terrible mistakes, and I do not condone them. But I am also certain that we need a better understanding of how and why they made these mistakes before we condemn them.

(d) The Taliban overthrown

A joint US and UK operation against Afghanistan was launched on 7 October 2001. Taliban military targets and al-Qaeda camps were attacked with cruise missiles fired from ships. Later, American long-range bombers carried out raids on the centre of Kabul. Meanwhile troops of the Northern Alliance began an offensive against Taliban positions in the north-west. On 14 October the Taliban offered to hand bin Laden over to an intermediary state, though not directly to the USA. In return they demanded that the USA should stop the bombing. However, President Bush rejected this offer and refused to negotiate. At first the Taliban forces put up strong resistance, and at the end of the month they still controlled most of the country. During November, under pressure from the continued US air attacks and the Northern Alliance forces, the Taliban began to lose their grip. On 12 November they abandoned Kabul and were soon driven from their main power base – the province of Kandahar. Many fled into the mountains or over the border into Pakistan. The USA continued to bomb the mountain region, hoping to flush out bin Laden and his al-Qaeda fighters, but without success.

The USA and its allies had achieved one of their aims: the unpopular Taliban regime had gone; but bin Laden remained elusive and was still a free man in 2004. On 27 November 2001 a peace conference met in Bonn (Germany), under the auspices of the

United Nations, to decide on a new government for Afghanistan. It was not easy to bring peace to this troubled country. Early in 2004 the central government of President Hamid Karzai in Kabul was struggling to impose its authority over troublesome warlords in the north. He was supported by US troops who were still pursuing the 'war on terror', and by NATO troops, who were trying to keep the peace and help rebuild the country. But it was an uphill task; the most ominous development was that the Taliban had regrouped in the south and over the border in Pakistan, financed partly by rising heroin production. UN officials were worried that Afghanistan might once again turn into a 'rogue state' in the hands of drug cartels. As the violence continued, even the aid agencies came under attack. In the summer of 2004 the Médecins sans Frontières organization, which had been active in Afghanistan for a quarter of a century, decided to pull out; this was a serious blow for ordinary Afghans.

Nevertheless, the promised elections, held in November 2004, were able to go ahead largely peacefully, in spite of threats of violence from the Taliban. President Karzai was elected for a five-year term; he won 55.4 per cent of the votes, which was not as much as he had hoped, but enough for him to claim that he now had legitimacy and a mandate from the people.

(e) Is the 'war on terror' a struggle between Islam and the West?

From the beginning of his campaign, Osama bin Laden claimed that it was part of a worldwide contest between the West and Islam. As early as 1996 he had issued a *fatwa* (a religious command) to all Muslims that they were to kill US military personnel in Somalia and Saudi Arabia. In 1998 he extended the *fatwa*: 'To kill Americans and their allies, civilian and military, is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.' When the attack on Afghanistan began, he tried to present it, not as a war against terrorism, but as a war against Afghanistan and against Islam in general. He urged Muslims living in countries whose governments had offered to help the USA to rise up against their leaders. He talked about revenge for the 80 years of humiliation which Muslims had suffered at the hands of the colonial powers: 'what America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted'. Bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, said that 11 September had divided the world into two sides: 'the side of the believers and the side of infidels. Every Muslim has to rush to make his religion victorious.'

(f) What was bin Laden hoping to achieve from his campaign?

- He had special interests in Saudi Arabia, the country where he was brought up and educated. After his exploits fighting the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, he returned to Saudi Arabia, but soon clashed with the government, a conservative monarchy which, he felt, was too subservient to the USA. He believed that as a Muslim country, Saudi Arabia should not have allowed the deployment of US and other Western troops on its territory during the Gulf War of 1991, because this was a violation of the Holy Land of Islam (Mecca and Medina, the two most holy cities in Islam, are both situated in Saudi Arabia). The government took away his Saudi citizenship and he was forced to flee to the Sudan, which had a fundamentalist Muslim regime. Bin Laden therefore hoped to get rid of the American military bases, which were still in Saudi Arabia at the beginning of 2001. Secondly, he wanted to achieve the overthrow of the Saudi government and its replacement by an Islamic regime.
- By this time the Saudi regime was beginning to feel concerned as its popularity dwindled. Many of the younger generation were suffering unemployment and

sympathized with bin Laden's anti-Americanism; this prompted the government to try to reduce its co-operation with the USA. Although it condemned the 11 September attacks, it was reluctant to allow US military aircraft to use its bases, and it took no active part in the campaign against Afghanistan. This annoyed the USA, which proceeded to remove almost all its troops from Saudi Arabia and set up a new headquarters in Qatar. Bin Laden's first aim had been achieved, and the second looked distinctly possible as unrest increased and al-Qaeda groups operating in Saudi Arabia became stronger. There were an increasing number of attacks on compounds housing foreign personnel. Without American troops to prop them up, the Saudi regime seemed likely to face a difficult time.

- He hoped to force a settlement in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict: he supported the creation of a Palestinian state, and, ideally, wanted the destruction of the state of Israel. This had not been achieved by 2011, when bin Laden was killed by American agents while living in hiding in Pakistan. A settlement of any kind seemed remote, unless the USA were to decide to use its political and financial influence over Israel.
- He hoped to provoke a worldwide confrontation between the Islamic world and the West, so that ultimately all foreign troops and influence in the Muslim and Arab world would be eliminated. Some observers believe this was the reason he planned the 11 September attacks on the USA: he calculated that the Americans would respond with disproportionate violence, which would unite the Muslim world against them. Once Western influence and exploitation had been eliminated, the Muslim states could concentrate on improving conditions and alleviating poverty in their own way, and they would be able to introduce Sharia law – the ancient law of Islam – which, they claimed, had been supplanted by foreign influence.

11.4 THE DOWNFALL OF SADDAM HUSSEIN

(a) Background to the attack on Iraq

After his defeat in the first Gulf War (1990–1), Saddam Hussein was allowed to remain in power. He defeated uprisings of Kurds in the north and Shia Muslims in the south, where he was especially brutal in his treatment of the rebels. When refugees fled into the marshes, Saddam had the marshland drained, and many thousands of Shia were killed. He had already used chemical weapons in his war against Iran and against the Kurds, and was known to have a biological weapons programme. By 1995 Iraq had a well-advanced nuclear weapons programme. Although they were reluctant to remove Saddam Hussein because of the chaos that might follow, the USA and the UK tried to restrain him by continuing the trade embargo placed on Iraq by the UN soon after Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. In 2000 these sanctions had been in place for ten years, but they seemed to have had little effect on Saddam; it was the ordinary people of Iraq who suffered because of shortages of food and medical supplies. In September 1998 the director of the UN relief programme in Iraq, Denis Halliday, resigned, saying that he could no longer carry out such an 'immoral and illegal' policy. In 1999, UNICEF reported that since 1990 over half a million children had died from malnutrition and lack of medicines as a direct result of sanctions.

However, sanctions did ensure that Saddam allowed inspections of his nuclear sites by members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), authorized by a UN Security Council resolution. It was discovered that the Iraqis had all the components necessary to manufacture nuclear warheads, and that construction was actually under way.

In 1998 the IAEA team destroyed all Saddam's nuclear sites and took away the equipment. At this point, however, there was no talk of removing Saddam from power, since he was keeping the Kurds and Shias under control, and thereby preventing the destabilization of the region.

(b) The USA and UK prepare to attack

The warning signals came with President Bush's State of the Union address in January 2002 when he referred to the world's rogue states, which were a threat because of their 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMD). He described them as an 'axis of evil'; the states named were Iraq, Iran and North Korea. It soon became clear that the USA, encouraged by its relatively easy victory in Afghanistan, was about to turn its attentions to Iraq. The US media began to try to convince the rest of the world that Saddam Hussein presented a serious threat and that the only remedy was a 'regime change'. *The justifications put forward by the Americans for an attack on Iraq were the following*:

- Saddam had chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and was working on a programme to produce ballistic missiles which could fly more than 1200 km (thus breaking the 150 km limit); these were the missiles necessary for the delivery of weapons of mass destruction.
- The entire world situation had changed since 11 September (9/11); the war against terrorism required that states which supported and encouraged terrorist organizations should be restrained.
- Iraq was harbouring terrorist groups, including members of al-Qaeda, which had a training camp specializing in chemicals and explosives. Iraqi intelligence services were co-operating with the al-Qaeda network, and together they presented a formidable threat to the USA and its allies.
- The longer action was delayed, the greater the danger would become. Khidir Hamza, an Iraqi exile who had worked on his country's nuclear programme, told the USA in August 2002 that Saddam would have useable nuclear weapons by 2005. Some supporters of war compared the situation with the 1930s, when the appeasers failed to stand up to Hitler and allowed him to become too powerful.

(c) Opposition to the war

Although UK prime minister Tony Blair pledged support for a US attack on Iraq, there was much less enthusiasm in the rest of the world than there had been for the campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan. There were massive anti-war demonstrations in the UK, Australia and many other countries, and even in the USA itself. *Opponents of the war made the following points*.

- Given that all his nuclear facilities had been destroyed in 1998 and that even more stringent trade sanctions had been imposed, it was highly unlikely that Saddam had been able to rebuild his facilities for producing WMD. Scott Ritter, the chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq, stated (in September 2002) that 'Since 1998 Iraq has been fundamentally disarmed. 90–95 per cent of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have been verifiably eliminated. This includes all of the factories used to produce chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and long-range ballistic missiles; the associated equipment of these factories; and the vast majority of products coming out of these

factories.' Clearly Iraq was much less of a threat in 2002 than it had been in 1991. There was a feeling that the dangers had been exaggerated by exiled Iraqi opponents of Saddam, who were doing their utmost to pressure the USA into removing him.

- Even if Saddam had all these WMD, it was most unlikely that he would dare to use them against the USA and its allies. Such an attack by Saddam would certainly have ensured his rapid overthrow. Nor had Saddam invaded another state, as he had in 1990, therefore that justification could not be used for an attack on Iraq.
- There was insufficient evidence that Iraq was harbouring al-Qaeda terrorists. US military intervention would make the situation worse by fostering even more violent anti-Western feeling. Congressional reports published in 2004 concluded that critics of the war had been right: Saddam had no stocks of weapons of mass destruction and there were no links between Saddam, al-Qaeda and 9/11.
- War should be the last resort; more time should be given for the UN inspectors to complete their search for WMD. Any military action should be sanctioned by the UN.
- It was suggested that the real motives of the USA were nothing to do with the war against terrorism. It was simply a case of the world's only superpower blatantly extending its control more widely – 'maintaining global US pre-eminence'. A group of leading Republicans (the party of President Bush) had already in 1998 produced a document urging President Clinton to pursue a foreign policy that would shape the new century in a way 'favourable to American principles and interests'. They suggested 'the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power'. If Clinton failed to act, 'the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel, and the moderate Arab states, and a significant proportion of the world's supply of oil will all be put at hazard. … American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN security council.' Having recently removed most of their forces from Saudi Arabia, the Americans would find Iraq the perfect substitute, enabling the USA to continue exercising control over the region's oil supplies.

(d) The United Nations and the war

In view of the doubts being expressed, and under pressure from Tony Blair, President Bush decided to give the UN a chance to see what it could achieve. In November 2002 the UN Security Council approved a resolution (1441) calling on Saddam Hussein to disarm or 'face serious consequences'. The text was a compromise between the USA and the UK on one side, and France and Russia (who opposed a war) on the other. The resolution did not give the USA full authority to attack Iraq, but it clearly sent a strong message to Saddam as to what he might expect if he failed to comply. The Security Council would assess any failure by Iraq to comply with the new more stringent inspection demands. Iraq accepted the resolution and Hans Blix and his team of 17 weapons inspectors arrived back in the country after an absence of four years.

Bush and Blair were impatient at the delay, and in January 2003 Blair began to push for a second Security Council resolution which would authorize an attack on Iraq. Bush stated that although he would be happy with a second resolution, he did not consider it necessary; he argued that Resolution 1441 already gave the USA authority to attack Saddam. The USA, UK and Spain pressed for another resolution, while France, Russia and China were adamant that the weapons inspectors should be given more time before military action was taken. By the end of February 2003, Blix was reporting that the Iraqis were co-operating and had agreed to destroy some missiles which had been discovered.

The USA, UK and Spain dismissed this information as a 'delaying tactic' by Saddam, although, in fact, early in March, Iraq began destroying missiles; this was described by Blix as 'a substantial measure of disarmament'. President Georges Chirac of France now made it clear that he would veto any Security Council resolution authorizing war against Iraq (10 March).

However, the Americans dismissed the objections of France and Germany contemptuously as 'old Europe' – out of touch with current trends. The USA, UK and Spain were determined to go ahead: they issued a joint ultimatum to Saddam giving him 48 hours to leave Iraq. When this was ignored, US and UK forces began air attacks and an invasion of southern Iraq from Kuwait (20 March). The USA claimed that 30 countries had agreed to join their coalition, though in the event, only the UK and Australia made any military contribution. As the invasion began, American historian Arthur Schlesinger wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*:

> The president has adopted a policy of 'anticipatory self-defence' that is alarmingly similar to the policy that Japan employed at Pearl Harbor, on a date which, as an earlier American president said it would, lives in infamy. Franklin D. Roosevelt was right, but today it is we Americans who live in infamy. … The global wave of sympathy that engulfed the United States after 9-11 has given way to a global wave of hatred of American arrogance and militarism … even in friendly countries, the public regards Bush as a greater threat to peace than Saddam Hussein.

(e) Saddam Hussein overthrown

Initially the invading forces made slower progress than had been expected, since some units of Iraqi troops put up strong resistance. US forces were hampered by the fact that Turkey had refused to allow US units to take up positions on its territory. This meant that it was impossible for the USA to mount a significant advance on Baghdad from the north. Forces advancing from the south were hampered by heavy desert sandstorms. By the end of March the expected swift victory had not yet been achieved; it was announced that the number of US troops would be doubled to 200 000 by the end of April. Meanwhile the assault on Baghdad by heavy bombers and cruise missiles continued. It emerged later that during the first four weeks of the attack, as many as 15 000 Iraqis were killed, of whom about 5000 were civilians.

International reaction to the invasion was mainly unfavourable. There were protest demonstrations throughout the Arab world, where the US action was seen simply as a blatant empire-building enterprise. An Iranian spokesman said it would lead to 'the total destruction of security and peace', while Saudi Arabia called for military occupation of Iraq to be avoided. Condemnation also came from Indonesia (which had the largest Muslim population in the world), Malaysia, France, Germany and Russia. However, a few countries expressed support, including the Philippines, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands; so did some of the former communist states of eastern Europe, notably Poland. This surprised many people, but the reason for it was simple: the USA had enormous prestige in their eyes because of the vital role it had played in the defeat of communism.

In early April the sheer weight and strength of the invaders began to tell. Iraqi units began to desert and resistance collapsed. US troops captured Baghdad, while the British took Basra, the main city in the south. On 9 April it was announced that Saddam's 24-year dictatorship was over, and the world was treated to television pictures of an American tank toppling a statue of Saddam in Baghdad, cheered on by a jubilant crowd (see Illus. 12.2). Saddam himself disappeared for the time being, but was captured in December 2003. On 1 May, President Bush declared that the war was over.

(f) The aftermath

The events of the year following the overthrow of Saddam were not what President Bush had been hoping for. *No weapons of mass destruction were found*. Worse than that, in January 2004 Paul O'Neill, a former US Treasury secretary who was sacked at the end of 2002 because he disagreed with the rest of the cabinet over Iraq, made some sensational revelations. He claimed that Bush had been determined to oust Saddam as far back as January 2001 when he took office, and that 11 September provided a convenient justification. Talk of the threat of weapons of mass destruction was merely a cover, since the cabinet knew perfectly well that Saddam had no such weapons of any significance. Thus the main justification for the war given by Bush and Blair seemed to have been invalidated.

As the US and UK occupation of Iraq went on, *the Iraqis*, *most of whom had at first been grateful for the removal of Saddam*, *became impatient*. There seemed little evidence of attempts at 'nation-building' by the Americans, whose methods of keeping order were often insensitive. Nor did they seem to have any clear plan for the future of Iraq. Inevitably, anti-American feeling grew and by June 2003 armed resistance was well under way. At first attacks were carried out just by Saddam loyalists, but they were soon joined by other groups: nationalists who wanted their country to be free and independent, and Sunni Muslims who wanted some kind of Islamic state.

In the Arab world outside Iraq *there was a wave of anti-Americanism*. Militants flocked into the country to support their fellow Muslims against the USA, which they viewed as the great enemy of Islam. The violence escalated as suicide bombers, using the tactics of Hamas and Hezbollah, targeted UN headquarters, police stations, the Baghdad Hotel, Iraqis who co-operated with the Americans, and American military personnel; by the end of 2003, 300 American soldiers had been killed – since President Bush declared the war to be over. So although al-Qaeda fighters were probably not active in Iraq before the invasion, they certainly were in its aftermath. The Americans hoped that the capture of Saddam would bring about a reduction of violence, but it seemed to make little difference.

What did the resistance movement want? A spokesman for one of the nationalist groups said: 'We do not want to see our country occupied by forces clearly pursuing their own interests, rather than being poised to return Iraq to the Iraqis.' One of the things that infuriated Iraqis was the way in which American companies were being awarded contracts for reconstruction work in Iraq, to the exclusion of all other contractors.

It seemed as though the whole focus of international attention was directed towards Iraq. What happened there would have repercussions throughout the Middle East and the whole sphere of international relations. The dangers were enormous:

- In a country where there were so many different religious, ethnic and political groups, what hope was there that a strong government with a working majority would emerge from elections? If the country were to descend into civil war, like the Lebanon during the years 1975–87, what action would the Americans take?
- The al-Qaeda organization had been strengthened by the increase in anti-American and anti-Western feeling. There were also a number of new networks of Islamic militants, with bases in Europe as well as the Middle East. In 2004, London was named as an important centre for recruiting, fundraising and the manufacture of false documents. Islamic militant cells were reported in Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and the Czech Republic. Terrorist attacks continued: even before the Iraq War, a bomb exploded on the resort island of Bali (part of Indonesia) killing almost 200 people, many of them Australian holidaymakers (October 2002). Indonesia was again the target in August 2003 when a bomb blast outside a US-owned hotel in Jakarta (the capital) killed ten Muslims, but only one European.

- The next target was Turkey, where Istanbul suffered four suicide-bomb attacks in five days. Two went off outside Jewish synagogues, one near the London-based HSBC bank, while the fourth badly damaged the British consulate, killing the UK consul-general. The attacks on UK targets were timed to coincide with a visit to London by President Bush. Altogether in the four attacks, for which al-Qaeda was blamed, around 60 people were killed, most of them local Turkish Muslims.
- In March 2004, some 200 people were killed in Madrid in multiple bomb attacks on four morning rush-hour trains. At first it was thought by the Spanish government to be the work of ETA – the Basque separatist movement; but it later became clear that the terrorists responsible were a Moroccan group allied to al-Qaeda; they had presumably acted in retaliation for the fact that Spain had supported the USA and UK in their attack on Iraq. The attacks had unexpected political results: in the Spanish general election held three days later, the government of José María Aznar, which had supported the war and had sent troops to Iraq, was defeated by the socialists, who had opposed the war. Only four weeks later, the new prime minister, José Luis Zapatero, withdrew all Spanish troops from Iraq.
- It was London's turn in July 2005, when four Muslim suicide bombers killed 52 people and injured almost 800 more on three Underground trains and a bus.
- While the Palestinian–Israeli dispute remained unsolved and American troops were in Iraq, there seemed little chance of an end to the 'war against terrorism'. Some observers suggested, as a first step, the withdrawal of American and British personnel from Iraq and their replacement by an interim UN administration backed by UN troops – from any country except the USA and the UK! In this way, the move towards democracy could be planned carefully, a constitution could be drawn up and elections conducted under UN auspices.

In 2004 most of the seasoned observers of the Middle East were saying the same thing: the USA, the world's most powerful state, must listen to what moderate Iraqis were saying if it wanted to avoid complete chaos in Iraq and the Middle East, and the prospect of another Vietnam. The situation continued to deteriorate; in April the Americans were faced with a full-scale Shia uprising led by the radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who wanted Iraq to become a Shia Islamic state. The Americans suffered further embarrassment and worldwide condemnation when stories emerged of Iraqi prisoners being tortured, abused and humiliated by American soldiers. Many Iraqis were transferred to the US detention centre at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, and there were regular newspaper reports of torture, unfair trials and suicides. In 2003, 117 prisoners were transferred to Guantánamo, joining over 600 detainees from several countries already there. Although President Barack Obama talked of closing the centre, it was still functioning at the beginning of 2012, when there were 171 inmates from 20 countries. It had taken over six years of detentions at Guantánamo before the US Supreme Court ruled (June 2008) that detainees had the right to challenge the legitimacy of their detention in the US federal court. Since then 38 men have been released after the court declared their detention illegal.

One of President Bush's main concerns was that he was due to face re-election in November 2004. It was important for him to bring the American involvement in Iraq to an end before then, if possible. It was decided to transfer authority to the Iraqis at the end of June 2004. The handover of power to an Iraqi interim government went ahead as planned, and some attempt was made to include representatives of all the different Iraqi groups. For example, the prime minister, Ayad Allawi, was a secular Shiite and leader of the Iraqi National Accord party; the president, Ajil al-Yawer, was a Sunni; there were two vice-presidents, one a Kurd, the other a leader of the Shiite Islamist Da'wa party. The UN Security Council unanimously approved a timetable for Iraq to move towards genuine

democracy. Direct democratic elections to a Transitional National Assembly were to be held no later than the end of January 2005. The Assembly would draw up a permanent constitution, under the terms of which a new democratic government was to be elected by the end of 2005. This went ahead as planned, and in the elections of December 2005, almost 77 per cent of eligible Iraqis actually voted.

The Shiite Islamic Iraqi Alliance emerged as the largest group, while the Kurdistan Alliance came second; altogether 12 different groups were represented, but ominously, most Sunni Muslims boycotted the elections. This meant that the Shia majority, who had been oppressed under Saddam, were now in a strong position, although they would need to form alliances with some of the smaller parties, since many important decisions required a two-thirds majority in parliament.

Unfortunately violence continued as Sunni militants, who included many Saddam supporters, fought Shias, and insurgents attacked American and British forces which were still there, ostensibly to support the Iraqi army. It was now clear that the Americans had made a bad mistake when, almost as soon as the occupation began, they had disbanded the Iraqi army. This meant that there were large numbers of men with military training with nothing to do except join in the insurgency against the foreigners. The situation also attracted al-Qaeda supporters from outside Iraq, who were experts at terrorist acts and were quick to seize the opportunity to strike at the detested Americans. In 2007 President Bush sent more troops to Iraq, bringing the total American force to 150 000. For a time it seemed as though this 'surge', as it was called, was managing to reduce the violence; consequently in June 2009 American troops were formally withdrawn from the streets of Baghdad. Predictably, violence soon increased again, with bombings, shootings and kidnappings everyday occurrences. Before long, however, Iraqi security forces, trained by the Americans, seemed to be getting the upper hand, and by the end of 2009 the government reported that civilian deaths were at the lowest level since the invasion in 2003. In December 2011 the war was formally declared to be over, and American troops withdrew into Kuwait, fulfilling the commitment that President Obama had given at the beginning of his presidency.

Sadly, however, within a few weeks, the bright new democratic state that was meant to take over from the Saddam dictatorship was in grave difficulties. Various sectarian conflicts which had lain dormant for many years had now erupted again, and warlords and militias seemed to be out of control. In January 2012 the prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, a Shia, accused the vice-president, Tariq al-Hashemi, a Sunni, of organizing terrorist attacks. A warrant was issued for his arrest, forcing him to flee into the Kurdish area in northern Iraq. This was seen by the Sunnis as the beginning of Maliki's campaign to eliminate non-Shia rivals one by one, in order to strengthen the Shia grip on power. The Sunnis responded with a wave of attacks: in January alone 170 people were killed in car and suicide bombings. The dead were mainly Shia Muslims, some of them pilgrims travelling to visit holy sites. Although the level of violence was not as serious as in the dark days of 2006, Iraq was still facing a crisis. There seemed to be three possible ways forward:

- Partition the country into three separate states – for the Shia, the Sunnis and the Kurds. This would delight the Kurds, who have large oil reserves in their territory; but it would mean the end of the state of Iraq.
- Introduce a federal system in which the regions have more control over their internal affairs and Baghdad's power is much less. The two Sunni areas of Anbar and Diyyala are strongly in favour of this solution.
- Continue with the present system and try to make it work more efficiently. Malaki favours this alternative because that would preserve Shia control, always providing that the other groups can be forced or persuaded to co-operate.

There were economic problems, too. In August 2009 the *New York Times* reported that Iraq's rich agricultural system had been completely devastated during the American and British occupation. During the 1980s Iraq was self-sufficient in producing wheat, rice, fruit, vegetables, sheep and poultry. They exported textiles and leather goods, including shoes. 'Slowly, Iraq's economy has become based almost entirely on imports and a single commodity, oil.' In 2010 oil exports made up around 95 per cent of Iraq's revenue; this left the country vulnerable and dependent on highly volatile markets.

11.5 THE CONTINUING WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

President Karzai was elected in 2004 for a five-year term, and his task was a difficult one. His new slogan was 'national participation'. He aimed to build a government of moderates, and he immediately launched a campaign to sideline the warlords, to clean up the drug trafficking, and to persuade farmers to switch to other crops instead of growing opium poppies. But as the Taliban insurgency gathered pace, so did the return to opium as the main cash crop. By 2007 about half the country's gross domestic product came from illegal drugs. The attempts by NATO forces to control the crop only led to further violence. By this time it was clear to many observers that it was highly unlikely that the Taliban could be defeated militarily; Karzai himself admitted that he had tried without success to open negotiations with the Taliban. His first message to newly elected US President Obama was a heartfelt plea to stop the bombing of civilians. This was soon after coalition troops had bombed a wedding party in Kandahar, allegedly killing 40 people. There was no reply from the White House. Some NATO members were beginning to think about reducing their troop numbers in the coalition force.

Presidential elections were due in 2009 and were held amid a major security operation mounted by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), established by the UN Security Council. There was a low turnout at only about 30 per cent; in some areas in the south the turnout was almost non-existent. In one district in Helmand province, four British soldiers were killed for the sake of just 150 votes. Karzai won a narrow victory over his main rival, Abdullah Abdullah, but the whole process was marred by massive fraud on all sides, most of all on behalf of Karzai, much to NATO's embarrassment. Meanwhile Taliban military successes continued and in many areas they set up shadow administrations with their own law courts. Karzai again called for peace talks with Taliban leaders, but this scandalized other opposition leaders who believed that the Taliban would insist on scrapping the democratic constitution. As violence continued, US president Obama announced the deployment of another 30 000 troops in Afghanistan in 2010, to stay for two years.

In May 2011 Osama bin Laden was killed by a US special operations unit. He had been living in hiding for some years with his family and al-Qaeda members in a large purpose-built compound in Pakistan. The American unit travelled by helicopters from Afghanistan, shot bin Laden and several others, and then flew out again, taking bin Laden's body with them. The assassination brought mixed reactions: there were celebrations across the USA, though a poll taken shortly afterwards showed that 60 per cent of those polled were afraid that it would increase the danger of terrorist attacks in America. A leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt said that the death of bin Laden completed the NATO mission in Afghanistan, and therefore all foreign troops should be withdrawn. One of the Hamas leaders in Gaza condemned the killing, describing bin Laden as 'an Arab holy warrior'. The government of Pakistan was criticized in the West because it had given shelter and protection to bin Laden (which it denied), and by Arabs for allowing the Americans into the country to carry out the killing.

The USA and NATO paid no heed to the Egyptian advice about withdrawing from Afghanistan. The war continued and by the end of 2011 the Taliban had acquired the support of another insurgent group, the Haqqani Network. This was based in the Waziristan area of Pakistan and operated across the frontier into Afghanistan. In response the Americans were training and arming local tribal militias in the hope that they would police their own communities. However, local people and the Taliban were soon complaining that these militias were out of control and were operating above the law. This did not bode well for the coalition forces, since it was to get rid of out-of-control militias that the Taliban came into being in 1994. Outright military victory over the insurgents seemed less and less likely. Even with the extra NATO troops in action, there were still not enough of them to establish real security. A NATO summit meeting was held in Lisbon in November 2011 at which secret plans were drawn up for troop withdrawals. David Cameron publicly promised that all 10 000 UK troops would be withdrawn by 2015. By this time Washington had signalled its support for President Karzai's attempts to begin talks with the Taliban, though President Obama himself was not keen on starting direct talks. His problem was that, thanks to all the earlier misinformation and propaganda by US politicians and the media, most Americans made no distinction between the Taliban and al-Qaeda and therefore regarded both of them as nothing but terrorists; with an election due in November 2012, he needed to be careful not to be seen to be appeasing terrorists. James Fergusson sums the situation up very well, though not everybody will agree with his conclusion:

> At least the possibility of talks is firmly on the table now – and neither side can afford to ignore indefinitely the wishes of the war-weary Afghan people, who have suffered more than any other group in this conflict. At least 11,400 civilians have been killed since 2001, and the casualty rate is still accelerating. No wonder 83 per cent of Afghans are now in favour of talks. Who would not choose compromise and the chance of peace over continued war, poverty and corruption? The alternative is to persevere with a war that looks increasingly unwinnable. If ordinary Afghans are ready to give the Taliban the benefit of the doubt, is it not time that the West did too?

11.6 THE PROBLEM OF IRAN

(a) The Islamic Republic

After the revolution of 1979 and the overthrow of the Shah, the charismatic Ayatollah Khomeini became leader. As a Shia Muslim cleric, he was soon able to transform the revolution, which had started as a protest movement against the Shah, into an Islamic revolution, culminating in an Islamic republic. But first there were sensational events. There was widespread fear in Iran that the Americans would try to restore the Shah to the throne, as they had done once before in 1953. In November 1979 a party of radical Khomeini supporters attacked the American embassy in Tehran and took 66 Americans hostage. Most of them were not released until early in 1981, after long negotiations and a failed rescue attempt in which eight Americans were killed and six helicopters lost. The two main characteristics of Islamic government, at least in Khomeini's view, were the primacy of divine law over all citizens, and the principle of democracy. However, in practice this meant that Khomeini acted as an autocratic ruler and became the symbol of opposition to the less desirable aspects of Western civilization and culture. Unfortunately most of Khomeini's time in power was dominated by the war with Iraq, which lasted from 1980 until 1989. At the end of it Iran was in a sorry state: the economy was in ruins, vital revenue from oil sales had been lost, much of industry had been put out of action and

inflation was running at over 30 per cent. Khomeini died in 1989, before the attack on Iraq and the downfall of Saddam Hussein in 1991.

The new president, Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, was able to take some advantage from this war. It meant that Iraq was removed from the political equation of the region for the time being, and it enabled Iran to rebuild and recover from the destruction of the earlier war. He won in the 1992 elections and shared power with the religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The economy gradually recovered, there were great improvements in public services, education and literacy and the government did its best to encourage birth control. But on the negative side, women were discriminated against regularly, wages were low and poverty widespread. In foreign affairs Iran was extremely hostile towards the USA and supported Hezbollah. In retaliation President Clinton condemned the Iranians on the grounds that they were organizing terrorism and harbouring terrorists. Meanwhile the Iranians were busy rearming and were considering developing nuclear weapons. It was felt that this was justified by the fact that so far Israel was the only state in the Middle East to possess nuclear armaments, so Iran needed them to act as a deterrent.

The 1997 presidential election was won by Muhammad Khatami, a more moderate leader than Rafsanjani; Khatami was in favour of liberalization and reform. He brought a more relaxed approach to both domestic and foreign policy. His government was more tolerant towards ordinary people: he believed in freedom of expression and punishments were less severe. He was soon popular with the unemployed and with the younger generation, many of whom were tired of the strict religious regime of the Ayatollahs. Abroad he improved relations with the European Union and with the Arab states. He even adopted a gentler attitude towards the USA. However, he was hampered by the intolerant religious right and also by the slump in the world price of oil, which made up around 90 per cent of revenue from Iran's exports. Khatami was re-elected in 2001 but had to face increasing opposition from the conservative clergy in parliament who did their best to undermine his efforts at reform. Liberal newspapers were banned and in the end Khatami was able to achieve very little. His support dwindled and in July 2003 there were anti-government demonstrations in Tehran. Lack of progress resulted in a steady growth of political apathy among the younger generation.

The presidential election of 2005 was won by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who had previously been Mayor of Tehran. He had caused controversy by reversing many of the reforms introduced by earlier mayors. According to Hooman Majd, an Iranian writer now resident in the USA, Ahmadinejad was a president in the 'common man' style. He represented the superstitions and prejudices of the ordinary Iranian – fiercely nationalist and conservative, but somewhat anti-clerical. 'At times,' Majd writes, 'he has seemed to be almost taunting the mullahs and ayatollahs.' However, he did kiss the Ayatollah Khamenei's hand during his authorization ceremony, to show that he acknowledged his superior status. Ahmadinejad soon set about reversing the few reforms that Khatami had managed to achieve. His foreign policy was uncompromising: Iran resumed its nuclear programme (see the next section), which he defended at the UN General Assembly soon after his election. Yet his domestic policies were not as successful as many had hoped. For example, his 2005 promise to put Iran's oil wealth 'on the people's dinner table or picnic rug' had not been kept by the time the next election arrived in 2009. The best that had been achieved in that direction was the distribution to the poor of surplus potatoes from government stocks. This provoked only ridicule: during the 2009 election campaign, opposition supporters carried banners which read: 'Death to Potatoes'.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the election of June 2009, taking 63 per cent of votes cast. The result was immediately challenged; millions of people simply did not believe it, and the regime was accused of fraud. Anti-government demonstrations began soon after the result was announced and within a few days, millions of people were on

the streets, many of them dressed in green. The opposition became known as the Green Movement. Khamenei applauded the election result and warned that serious repercussions would follow if the streets were not cleared. When this was ignored, troops fired on the crowds and attacked a section of Tehran University where some of the Green leaders were based. Over a hundred young people were killed in one day. At least one highly respected jurist, Hossein Ali Montazeri, declared that the election was null and void and that Ahmadinejad had no authority. Demonstrations continued into 2010, but the regime did not panic. The Greens were eventually outnumbered, outmanoeuvred and overwhelmed. Gradually attention focused on external events, including the threat of Israeli expansion and American protests at Iran's nuclear programme. For a time this rallied support behind the regime, but in February 2011 thousands of Green supporters defied a government ban and staged a massive demonstration in support of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. The fact that both these regimes were ousted later in the year did nothing to calm the Islamic republic.

In the spring of 2012, the situation was confused. People were tired of all the restrictions on civil liberty, for which they blamed the government. There were also economic problems caused by US and EU sanctions imposed in protest against Iran's nuclear programme. Most Iranians blamed the USA for this; American talk of attacks on their nuclear installations stimulated the Iranians' feelings of patriotism. Russia and China both supported Iran; President Vladimir Putin of Russia claimed that the West's real motive was to overthrow the Islamic republic. One of the US aims was to spread democracy around the world; yet Iran already had a more or less functioning democracy and a democratically elected government, flawed though the 2009 election might well have been.

(b) Iran and its nuclear programme

Iran already had nuclear technology before the 1979 revolution. An atomic research centre was set up in 1967 under the auspices of Tehran University. The Shah himself was keen for Iran to have nuclear power, and in 1974 the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) was founded. The Shah insisted that the nuclear programme was for entirely peaceful purposes, and Iran signed the Non-Proliferation Treaties (NPT) which said that countries which already had nuclear weapons (the USA, the USSR, China, France and Britain) could keep them, but no other country could join. In return they would supply peaceful economic technology and would themselves move towards disarmament. The government of the new Islamic republic stopped the nuclear programme on the grounds that it was far too expensive and required foreign expertise to operate. Ayatollah Khomeini wanted Iran to be able to 'go it alone'. Before long, however, there were serious power shortages and the government was forced to announce a U-turn. But the situation had changed: following the kidnappings at the American embassy in Tehran in November 1979, the USA imposed economic and military sanctions on Iraq and put pressure on the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) not to get involved with Iran. In 1988 Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, who at that point was chairman of the Iranian parliament, appealed to Iranian scientists working abroad to come home – it was their patriotic duty to work on the nuclear programme. The government continued to insist publicly that it had no plans to acquire nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless, as David Patrikarakos points out (in *Nuclear Iran: The Birth of an Atomic State*):

> Iran certainly had reason to want a bomb. It was extremely unpopular with one of the world's two superpowers and fighting a war with Iraq. The international community's silence about Iraq's invasion and its subsequent use of chemical weapons, as well

as the tacit US and near universal Arab support of Iraq during the war, all seemed to confirm that Iran could trust no one. It is likely that Iran launched a covert weapons programme about this time.

He goes on to explain that during the 1990s the nuclear programme began to concentrate on uranium enrichment and plutonium production, both classic ways of making a bomb. The government also resolved that by 2005, at least 20 per cent of Iran's energy should come from nuclear power. In 1990 Iran signed nuclear co-operation agreements with Russia and China. By 2000 the AEOI was secretly well under way with its uranium-enriching programme at the nuclear plant at Arak.

However, not all Iranians were happy at the direction their nuclear programme was taking. In August 2002 an opposition group made public details of the Arak plant and of another nuclear site at Natanz. There was immediate consternation in the West, which was now convinced that Iran was on the verge of producing a nuclear weapon. Britain, France and Germany, encouraged by the USA, demanded that Iran should give up uranium enrichment, which was the quickest way of making a nuclear bomb. The request was rejected and since 2005 Iran has refused to negotiate about it. *President Ahmadinejad mounted a strong defence of Iran's policy at the UN General Assembly in 2005. He denounced what he called the West's 'nuclear apartheid';* throughout his two terms as president (2005–13) he seemed to delight in irritating the Americans by making the enrichment programme into an icon of patriotism.

In fact, although support for the nuclear programme was more or less universal in Iran, there were disagreements over whether it should concentrate on producing bombs or whether the priority should be the production of electricity. During the 2009 election campaign there was criticism of Ahmadinejad's deliberately confrontational style which, it was felt, only further antagonized the West. Although he won the election, possibly fraudulently, many observers felt that he had become isolated and diminished. According to the IAEA, at the end of 2011 Iran had enough uranium at the Natanz site to make four nuclear bombs, but it admitted that there was no definite proof that they had actually produced a bomb. The Iranians insisted that the enriched uranium was intended for medical isotopes. By February 2012 the IAEA's tone had changed. An inspection in January had shown that the Iranians had experimented on making warhead designs and they had also significantly stepped up the production of enriched uranium. They had not co-operated fully with the investigation and had refused to allow inspectors to visit certain sites. Even so, *there was still no incontrovertible evidence of weapons production,* and some experts believed that working on its own, Iran would be unable to make a bomb before 2015 at the earliest.

Tensions mounted as threats and counter-threats flew around. The USA was said to have drawn up plans to attack Iran's nuclear sites. Iran announced that oil exports would be cut off to any country that backed the USA. This caused panic in Europe and sent petrol prices soaring. Israel threatened to make a pre-emptive strike against Iran, and Iran responded by promising to attack any country that allowed bombers of whatever nationality to use their bases for attacks on Iran.

11.7 THE ARAB SPRING

The series of anti-government protests and demonstrations known as the Arab Spring began in **Tunisia** on 18 December 2010; in less than a month, president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali had fled to Saudi Arabia after 23 years in power (14 January 2011). Encouraged by the rapid success of the revolution in Tunisia, a wave of unrest and violence swept across North Africa and the Middle East in countries where the lack of democracy had enabled leaders to stay in power for many years. In **Egypt** president Hosni Mubarak resigned

(14 February 2011) after 30 years in control. In **Algeria** the government survived after agreeing to allow more civil liberties and to end the state of emergency which had been in operation for 19 years (April 2011). King Abdullah II of **Jordan** responded to protests by sacking two consecutive prime ministers and promising reforms, though there was still dissatisfaction with the slow progress of change. President Omar Al-Bashir of **the Sudan** was forced to announce that he would not stand for re-election when his term ran out in 2015. In **Yemen** President Ali Abdullah Saleh hung on through almost a year of demonstrations and shootings, and an assassination attempt that left him seriously injured. Finally he was forced to stand down, though not before close on 2000 people had been killed. The agreement allowed him and his family safe passage into Saudi Arabia (November 2011). Even the apparently completely stable, ultra-conservative **Saudi Arabia** saw a few gentle protests which prompted the elderly King Abdullah to promise reforms. In **Bahrain,** a small island off the coast of Saudi Arabia, beginning in March 2011, there was a series of violent pro-democracy protests by the majority Shia who felt discriminated against by the ruling Sunni al-Khalifa dynasty. Reconciliation talks began in July and King Hamad promised reforms. But actual progress was slow, and civil war was still raging in January 2013.

Eventually the revolutionary protests spread to two of the largest states in the region – Libya and Syria. In **Libya** Colonel Muammar Gaddafi had been in power for 42 years and had expressed support for both Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak before they were forced out. Time was running out for Gaddafi too: in October 2011 he was captured and killed in cold blood by revolutionaries, but it had taken a full-scale civil war in which around 30 000 people lost their lives. **Syria** had been ruled by the Baathist regime since 1963 and the state of emergency imposed at that time was still in place. Serious uprisings began in March 2011 when some children were arrested and allegedly tortured for writing anti-government slogans on walls in the southern city of Daraa. Protests rapidly spread to the capital, Damascus, and to other cities, including Homs. President Bashar al-Assad showed very little willingness to make concessions – security forces responded harshly and army tanks stormed several cities. By the end of 2011 the most determined opposition was concentrated in Homs, the third largest city in Syria with a population of about a million. Here the district of Baba Amr was occupied and controlled by revolutionaries. But in February 2012 Assad ordered a deadly all-out attack on Baba Amr, arousing condemnation and calls for him to step down from the West and from the UN. These were ignored, and in early March the revolutionaries were driven out of Homs. The situation is still ongoing.

(a) What caused the Arab Spring?

There were a whole host of causes and motives behind the protests. The lack of genuine democracy in most countries, except Iran and Turkey, meant that dictators and absolute monarchs had been able to stay in power for long periods, like Colonel Gaddafi, who had ruled Libya for 40 years. Inevitably there was corruption at the top levels, concentration of wealth in the hands of the ruling classes, and human rights violations. In the last couple of decades there had been some progress in most of these countries. Living standards had risen, education had become more widespread and the younger generation was computer-literate. This only added to the problem: these educated young people resented the lack of opportunities and jobs, the immense gap between the wealthy elite and the rest of the population, and the corruption, and now they had the skills, using social networking internet sites, to organise strikes and demonstrations more effectively. High food prices in 2010 caused great hardship among the already poverty-stricken unemployed workers. It was no coincidence that a number of the leaders under attack, including President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and President al-Assad of Syria, were pro-western dictators supported by the USA. Events in Tunisia leading to the

rapid overthrow of President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011 sparked off similar protests and uprisings that made up the Arab Spring. A closer look at four of these will show examples of the different forms and outcomes that occurred across the region.

(b) Tunisia

In December 2010 a young college graduate, Mohammed Bouazizi, who had been unable to find a job, was trying to sell fruit and vegetables at a roadside stand in the town of Sidi Bouzid. But he had no permit because they were expensive, and the police confiscated his goods. Driven to desperation, on 17 December he doused himself with petrol and set himself alight on the street. Although he was alive when passers-by managed to extinguish the flames, he was badly burned and died a month later. There were immediate protest demonstrations which quickly spread to other towns. In the capital, Tunis, demonstrators attacked police cars and set government buildings on fire. Their grievances were the high unemployment rate which stood at 30 per cent for those between 15 and 29, rising prices, general lack of freedom of expression and the obvious wealth and extravagant lifestyle of the president and his family. Tensions were increased when Wikileaks released a secret cable sent from the US embassy in Tunis to Washington. This talked of corruption at the highest levels and claimed that the Ben Ali family ran the country like a kind of Mafia.

President Ben Ali appeared on television vowing to punish all rioters, though he did promise that more jobs would be created. He also complained that riots would damage the tourist industry, one of Tunisia's main sources of income. Tunisia had no oil revenue, which meant that the government could not afford to buy off the protesters by raising wages, paying unemployment benefit and building new homes, as King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia did. Consequently demonstrations and riots continued and at least 200 people were killed by police and security forces. With no prospect of an end to the violence, Ben Ali decided it was time to leave: on 14 January 2011, after 23 years in power, he fled the country and took refuge in Saudi Arabia.

A caretaker government was hurriedly put together, consisting mainly of members of Ben Ali's party (the Constitutional Democratic Rally – RCD) plus five members of opposition groups, with Mohammed Ghannouchi as prime minister. With the government still dominated by the 'old gang', very little progress could be made, and protests continued. The five new members soon resigned in exasperation, and on 27 January Ghannouchi reshuffled his government. All the RCD members were dropped, except Ghannouchi himself, who remained prime minister. The party was eventually dissolved and its assets were seized. But by this time the momentum was so strong that none of these moves satisfied the protesters. At the end of February Ghannouchi at last acknowledged defeat and resigned. A former opposition leader, Beji Caid el Sebsi, became prime minister; one of his first actions was to release all political prisoners, and almost immediately the situation became calmer.

In October 2011 people were allowed to vote for representatives to a constituent assembly which would draw up a new constitution. Ennahda, a moderate Islamist party, emerged as the largest single grouping. They formed a coalition with two smaller secular parties, Ettakatol and the Congress for the Republic Party. In December the new interim government elected Moncef Marzouki as president for one year. He was a secularist and a highly respected figure mainly because of his fearless opposition to Ben Ali. In 1994 he had been imprisoned for having tried to run against Ben Ali in the presidential election. After his release he was forced to go into exile in France. As president he would share power with Prime Minister Hamali Jebali of Ennahda. Many secularists were unhappy about this, complaining that the Islamists would undermine Tunisia's liberal values. However, Ennahda denied any such intention and insisted that they would rule in the same way as the

successful moderate Islamic government in Turkey. In January 2012, as Tunisia celebrated the first anniversary of Ben Ali's overthrow, there were still serious problems facing the new government. The main one was high unemployment – the national average was just under 20 per cent, but in some inland areas as high as 50 per cent.

(c) Egypt

There were many similarities between the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings. Hosni Mubarak had been president in Egypt even longer than Ben Ali in Tunisia. Mubarak had come to power in 1981 after the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Although he had been re-elected numerous times, only the 2005 election had been contested. In the parliamentary elections of November 2010 the moderate Islamic group, the Muslim Brotherhood, lost almost all its seats. They claimed that the election had been rigged, and it left Mubarak's party in almost total control. The next presidential election was due in September 2011 and it seemed clear that Mubarak would win. On 17 January 2011 a man set fire to himself outside parliament in Cairo, emulating the example of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia, who was now seen as a martyr. Six more self-immolations soon followed and Mohamed El Baradei, an opposition leader and former UN nuclear weapons inspection chief, warned that this could unleash a 'Tunisia-style explosion'. Activists began to organize a national 'day of anger' to protest about unemployment, poor living standards, the tough methods of the security forces and the lack of genuine democracy.

On 25 January 2011 the protest was launched: in Tahrir Square in Cairo, and in other cities there were the largest demonstrations seen for a generation, and their demand was simple – 'Mubarak resign'. In response Mubarak ordered a crackdown. Security forces attacked the protesters, using tear gas and beatings, and hundreds were arrested. After four days of violence Mubarak appeared on television and announced that he had sacked his government, that he was committed to democracy, but that he would continue as president. This did nothing to satisfy the protesters, and on 30 January, as the crowds gathered in Tahrir Square to defy a night-time curfew, El Baradei called on the president to step down immediately. El Baradei was now in a strong position; he had gained the support of the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition groups and he called on the army to negotiate about a regime change, raising the possibility of the army playing a role in government.

By this time the USA and the EU were seriously concerned about the situation. President Mubarak was seen as an invaluable ally in the Middle East. So long as he remained in power, he would keep out the Islamists. 'What we don't want', said Hilary Clinton, the American secretary of state, 'are radical ideologies to take control of a very large and important country in the Middle East.' Yet they had to admit that the Egyptian people had genuine grievances. Both Americans and Europeans agreed that Egypt needed political reform and an orderly transition to democratic government. There seems no doubt that this decision was communicated to Mubarak himself and the first step in the transition must be the resignation of the president himself, though not necessarily immediately. Consequently on 1 February 2011, the 82-year-old Mubarak announced that he would stand down – but not yet! He would stay until the end of his term in September, so that he could oversee the transition himself. Even that was too long for the protesters, who were still camped in their thousands in Tahrir Square and made no effort to disperse. The following day thousands of Mubarak supporters invaded the square, attacking the activists with clubs, knives, bats, spears and whips, some of them riding camels and horses. Casualties were high, but the attackers failed to dislodge the protesters, who seemed to grow in number. Since the protests had begun in January about 800 people had lost their lives. This time the regime tried to bribe the revolutionaries by announcing wage and

pensions increases of 15 per cent. For the first time in 30 years a vice-president, Omar Suleiman, was appointed. On 10 February Mubarak announced that he had handed over all presidential powers to the vice-president. Again it was all to no avail; as one spokesman said: 'Our main object is for Mubarak to step down. We don't accept any other concessions.' With his main supporter, the USA, becoming more and more restive at the apparent stalemate, Mubarak finally bowed to the inevitable: Suleiman announced that Mubarak had resigned and had handed power over the armed forces of Egypt (11 February 2011). A *Guardian* newspaper report described the scene as the news was broadcast: 'A few moments later a deafening roar swept central Cairo. Protesters fell to their knees and prayed, wept and chanted. Hundreds of thousands of people packed into Tahrir Square, the centre of the demonstrations, waving flags, holding up hastily written signs declaring victory, and embracing soldiers.'

The military immediately dissolved parliament and suspended the constitution, and on 4 March appointed a civilian, Essam Sharaf, as prime minister. But there was a long way to go before complete calm could be restored and a democratic and stable system introduced. The new government began well: Mubarak's National Democratic party was dissolved and its assets taken over by the state. The hated state security agency, which was responsible for most of the human rights violations, was abolished and the 30-year state of emergency was lifted. A trouble-free referendum was held in which 77 per cent of voters supported changes to the constitution which would enable genuinely democratic elections to be held for parliament and the presidency within the next six months. But it gradually became clear that the generals had decided to keep permanent control. When further demonstrations were held protesting about the slow progress of reforms, the army clamped down again, arresting thousands and injuring several hundred people in Tahrir Square (29 June). Mubarak's emergency laws were reintroduced, causing yet more protests. The announcement that elections would be held on 28 November did nothing to soothe the opposition. They were convinced that any elections would be fixed to enable remnants of the old regime to stay in power.

In October 2011 there was an ominous new development. Between 10 and 15 per cent of Egypt's 82 million population are Coptic Christians. In the past they had often been attacked by Muslim fundamentalists, although Mubarak had been sympathetic towards them. During the anti-Mubarak demonstrations, Muslims and Christians had worked together and protected each other. Now there began a series of anti-Christian riots and attacks on churches in Cairo and Alexandria. It was reported that in some places soldiers had stood by and watched, or had even encouraged the attackers. Christians held a protest march in Cairo and were attacked by security forces; 24 Christians were killed and at least 500 injured. The Muslim Brotherhood, a moderate Islamist party, condemned the attacks on churches and criticized the military government for the lack of progress towards democracy. Consequently, the promised elections went ahead peacefully on 28 November, and as expected, the Muslim Brotherhood Freedom and Justice party won more seats than any other party in parliament. Together with the other smaller Islamist groups they formed a clear majority over the more liberal political groups that had emerged during the uprisings. The main function of this parliament, which was due to meet in March 2012, was to draw up a new constitution. However, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) announced that they, and not the MPs, would have the final say over the new constitution. This naturally brought them into confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood, and violent clashes followed in Tahrir Square. But the army had its way: under the new arrangements the president was to have much less power. In the presidential election of June 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohammed Morsi, won a narrow victory. It was not long before he took steps to bring the army under control: in August 2012 he dismissed two of the most powerful military men, making it clear that he intended to ensure that Egypt moved towards an effective democracy.

(d) Libya

Leading a small group of junior officers, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi seized power in Libya in 1969 in a bloodless coup. They took their opportunity when King Idris of Libya, who was regarded as being too pro-West, was away in Turkey for medical treatment. The Libyan Arab Republic was proclaimed and Gaddafi remained at the head of the government until his overthrow in 2011. Libya was fortunate to have large oil reserves, and Gaddafi, who described himself as a socialist, began to spend much of the oil revenues on policies to modernize and develop the country. By 1990 the Libyans could claim that their country was the most advanced in Africa. Everything was centrally planned: there were job-creation schemes, welfare programmes providing free education and healthcare; there were more hospitals and more doctors. There were vast housing projects – in some areas the populations of entire villages living in mud-hut-style shanty towns were moved into new modern homes complete with electricity, running water and even satellite television. Women were given equal rights with men, the literacy rate rose from something like 12 per cent to nearer 90 per cent and the child mortality rate fell to only 15 per thousand live births, whereas the average for Africa was about 125 per thousand. Libya had the highest overall living standards in Africa, and it was achieved without any foreign loans.

In spite of all this success, Gaddafi still had his critics. He was much less popular in the east of the country, which lagged behind the rest in social and economic progress. There were poverty-stricken areas without fresh water and efficient sewage systems. Gaddafi was accused of spending too much of Libya's income on his own family and his close circle of supporters, all of whom had conspicuously lavish lifestyles. He also faced hostility from abroad: during the 1970s it emerged that Gaddafi had stocks of chemical weapons, including nerve gas. He was known to be trying to buy weapons of mass destruction from China and later from Pakistan, though without success. The USA and the West were suspicious of his intentions, especially as he was known to be financing militant anti-Western Islamist and Communist organizations and made no secret of the fact that he was supplying the IRA with bombs. In 1984 the UK broke off diplomatic relations with Libya after a protest demonstration by anti-Gaddafi Libyans outside the Libyan embassy in London ended in violence. Shots were fired from inside the embassy, killing a British policewoman. Libya was now viewed as a pariah state by the USA and the West, and many countries imposed economic sanctions. More bomb outrages followed, including an attack on a nightclub in Berlin. Gaddafi denied any involvement in this incident, but US president Ronald Reagan used it as the pretext for bombing Tripoli, the Libyan capital, and Benghazi in the east, killing around a hundred civilians. A series of tit-for-tat incidents continued, culminating in the destruction of the American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland in December 1988.

The collapse of the USSR and the fall of communism in eastern Europe changed the international situation. Gaddafi had usually been able to count on the support of the USSR in his anti-Western stance. Now he decided that it would be wise to try to improve relations with the West. He agreed to hand over two men alleged to have planted the bomb on the American airliner, and in 1999 they went on trial. He also promised to pay $2.7 billion as compensation to the victims' families, and this had mostly been paid by 2003. The UN responded by lifting the trade and financial sanctions on Libya. Then in December 2003 Libya promised to renounce weapons of mass destruction and Gaddafi invited the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) to inspect and dismantle their nuclear installations. It was no coincidence that this offer came after Saddam Hussein of Iraq had been overthrown by the Americans and British. US president George W. Bush claimed that it was a direct consequence of the war in Iraq, and it seems likely that Gaddafi was afraid that, given half a chance, they would overthrow him too. In 2004 the IAEA inspectors were shown Libya's stockpiles of chemical weapons, including mustard gas, and allowed to visit nuclear installations. Relations between Libya and the West gradually improved: Gaddafi

had successful meetings with several European leaders, and was even hugged by Tony Blair! In July 2009 he attended the G8 Summit in Italy where he met US president Barack Obama. Western countries had their own motives for working with Libya – mainly that they wanted Libyan oil and opportunities of lucrative investment in Libya.

It was ironic that at a time when Gaddafi was co-operating with the USA in the war on terror, and was beginning to be regarded as an ally, his popularity among Libyans was on the wane. During the 1990s he had faced increasing opposition from Islamist extremists known as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which tried to assassinate him in 1996. Gaddafi then began passing anti-terrorist information to the American CIA and the British Secret Service. After some German anti-terrorist agents working in Libya were killed by al-Qaeda members, Gaddafi ordered the arrest of Osama bin Laden. During the presidency of George W. Bush (2001–9) the relationship became closer – the CIA began sending suspected terrorists to Libya, where they would be tortured to make them confess. This was known as the 'extraordinary rendition' programme; some of those 'rendered' were Libyan opponents of Gaddafi and some of them were members of extremist Islamist groups. But all was not well with the Libyan economy – falling gas prices led to rising unemployment, and around Benghazi in eastern Libya there was resentment that the people were still not sharing in the general prosperity; nor were they likely to, in the present economic crisis.

It was in February 2011 that anti-government protesters in Benghazi, encouraged by the news from Tunisia and Egypt, decided to launch their campaign. Benghazi, in the neglected east of the country, is Libya's second largest city. Unemployment was disproportionately high, especially among men aged 18 to 34. The protesters, who were mostly unarmed, demanded jobs, opportunities and political freedoms and the demonstrations were peaceful. However, after four days Gaddafi decided that brute force was the way to deal with the problem. Troops fired on the unarmed crowds, killing at least 230 people. Saif al-Islam, one of Gaddafi's sons, appeared on television and blamed the violence on extremist Islamists. He warned that there would be a civil war if order was not restored. In fact, there was very little evidence of Islamist involvement. Appeasement of the protesters might have been a more successful option. Gaddafi's brutal assault only made the crowds more angry and more determined to continue. Nor was it just the masses who were horrified at the violence: Libya's representative to the Arab League and the ambassador to China both resigned; the latter called on the army to intervene on the side of the protesters and urged all the diplomatic staff to resign. Leaders of the uprising in the east announced that they would halt all oil exports within 24 hours unless the authorities stopped their violent suppression, a move that would be disastrous for the economy. By the end of February 2011 much of eastern Libya was under rebel control and an interim government, the Transitional National Council, had been set up in Benghazi. The USA, Britain and France called for Gaddafi to step down, claiming that he had 'lost the legitimacy to lead'.

Gaddafi had no intention of standing down. By mid-March his forces had counter-attacked and were on the outskirts of Benghazi. Civilian deaths numbered many thousands and Gaddafi warned that no mercy would be shown to any civilians in Benghazi who resisted. The UN Security Council voted in favour of taking all necessary action, including air strikes against Gaddafi forces in order to protect civilians. There was no mention of sending in ground troops, or of forcing Gaddafi from power. A coalition of the USA, European states and the Arab League was formed, and eventually NATO took overall control of the operation. NATO airstrikes targeted Gaddafi's troops surrounding Benghazi and forced them to withdraw, leaving their bombed tanks behind. The rebels then went on the offensive, advancing westwards towards Tripoli, only to be met by another Gaddafi counter-attack which recaptured most of the territory. Early in April the rebels received a boost when Moussa Koussa, for over 30 years one of Gaddafi's closest aides, defected to Britain. Stalemate was reached when the rebels managed to hold on to Ajdabiya. Meanwhile another combat zone had developed in the west where Gaddafi forces were

besieging the port of Misrata, the third largest city in Libya. On 30 April Gaddafi offered a ceasefire and called for talks with NATO, but the rebels rejected the offer; they could not believe that the offer was genuine.

The civil war dragged on through the summer of 2011. NATO air strikes continued to keep up the pressure on the Gaddafi regime. Several countries, including the UK, officially recognized the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate government of Libya, claiming that it 'had proved its democratic credentials'. At times, however, there were ominous developments that did not bode well for the future, if and when Gaddafi departed. There were divisions among the different militias fighting for the rebel cause: on 30 July the most senior rebel commander, General Abdel Fatah Younis, was shot dead by members of a militia linked to Islamists. In Britain there was criticism of the government's recognition of the NTC. There were fears that the NTC was full of potential for disunity and that 'the Libyan conflict would end with a government we don't like'. Throughout August rebel forces attacked Tripoli and at the end of the month they forced their way in and captured Gaddafi's walled citadel and fortified compound. There had been fierce fighting as hundreds of Gaddafi loyalist snipers continued to resist. Gaddafi and many of his officials had withdrawn to his birthplace, the coastal town of Sirte. He refused to surrender and his diehard supporters put up a brave fight. The inevitable end came on 20 October when NTC troops finally gained control of Sirte. Gaddafi himself was captured and killed. His 42-year rule was over.

The removal of Gaddafi remains a controversial affair. In the USA, Britain and much of western Europe, it was welcomed as a triumph for NATO and the UN, and a significant milestone in their campaign to spread democracy around the world. For the liberal democrat revolutionaries of Libya, it meant the overthrow of an autocratic tyrant. Gaddafi was said by Western leaders to have forfeited his right to rule because of the brutal way he had suppressed peaceful demonstrations and slaughtered his own people. After 42 years of Gaddafi's rule, the people of Libya were not much further forward in political terms than they had been in 1969 when he seized power. Most Libyans now saw NATO as their saviour, and were looking forward to a democratic future.

However, some countries, including China, Russia, Brazil, India, Germany and Turkey, as well as many Western observers, held a rather different view. They believed that NATO should not have intervened and that the civil war should have been allowed to take its own course. It was argued that Gaddafi still had a considerable measure of support, as witnessed by the huge demonstration of Gaddafi loyalists in Tripoli on 1 July and the fierce resistance that his forces put up. After all, he had given the Libyan people arguably the highest overall standard of living in Africa, with an annual per capita income of $12 000. There is evidence that reports of brutal behaviour by Gaddafi forces, including the bombing of peaceful demonstrators in Tripoli, were greatly exaggerated and may well have been rebel propaganda. It is now widely accepted that the Libyan government was not responsible for Lockerbie and the Berlin nightclub bombings; the reason why they agreed to pay compensation was not an admission of guilt, it was the Libyan government's attempt to 'buy peace'. Yet because of NATO's intervention, the combined uprising, civil war and then NATO bombing to 'protect civilians' killed around 30 000 people, left tens of thousands seriously wounded and caused massive damage to Libya's infrastructure.

According to some observers, contrary to what western political leaders claimed, there was a viable alternative that was never seriously attempted – a negotiated peace. Hugh Roberts (who was director of the International Crisis Group's North Africa Project from 2002 until 2007, and again during the Libyan civil war in 2011) explains how, on 10 March 2011, the International Crisis Group (ICG) put forward a plan for a settlement. This involved setting up a contact group made up of representatives from Libya's neighbouring states, who would help to arrange a ceasefire, and then bring the two sides together for negotiations leading to a peaceful settlement. An international peacekeeping force would

be deployed once the ceasefire had been agreed. This was before the UN voted to approve military intervention; but only few days later, before there was time to act on the ICG plan, the Security Council voted to take 'all necessary measures' to protect civilians. In the words of Hugh Roberts:

> By inserting 'all necessary measures' into the resolution, London, Paris and Washington licensed themselves, with NATO as their proxy, to do whatever they wanted whenever they wanted in the full knowledge that they would never be held to account, since as permanent veto-holding members of the Security Council, they are above all laws.

However, the resolution did also demand a ceasefire and an end to all attacks on civilians, as a prelude to negotiations. Gaddafi, whose forces at that point were on the outskirts of Benghazi, immediately announced a ceasefire and proposed a dialogue. As Hugh Roberts put it: 'what the Security Council demanded and suggested, he provided in a matter of hours'. The offer was immediately rejected by one of the senior rebel commanders, Khalifa Haftar, on the grounds that Gaddafi could not be trusted, and the Western powers simply accepted this. A week later Turkey announced that it had held talks with both sides and offered to help negotiate a ceasefire. Gaddafi once again agreed, but the NTC rejected the offer and demanded the resignation of Gaddafi before they would agree to a ceasefire. Gaddafi offered to call a ceasefire three more times – in April, May and June – and each time the offer was rejected. No pressure was brought on the NTC, no doubt because the mission of the Western powers was regime change.

Even before Gaddafi was so unceremoniously killed, there were disturbing signs for the West that genuine democracy might not be the outcome of the civil war after all. When Gaddafi claimed that al-Qaeda was involved in the uprising, he was probably exaggerating. But in fact the revolution did stir up and mobilize the Islamists. For example, when the NTC chairman, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, made his first trip from Benghazi to Tripoli, he announced that all legislation of the future NTC government would be based on the Islamic Sharia law. The newly appointed military commander of Tripoli was none other than Abdul Hakim Belhadj, a former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. This extremist group had waged a terrorist campaign against Gaddafi and the Libyan state throughout the 1990s and had provided hundreds of recruits for al-Qaeda. The worry for genuine Libyan democrats and for the West, once the war was over, was that the various factions and militias that had combined to overthrow the Gaddafi regime now battled among themselves for control. By December 2011 the Libyan national army, commanded by Gaddafi's former generals, was finding it very difficult to disarm the militias, each of which controlled its own area. The militias were intensely suspicious of the intentions of the NTC, which was dominated by people from the east of the country. The NTC was acting secretively: although a cabinet had been appointed, nobody knew who its members were and its meetings were held in secret. When it was announced that the oil and economic ministries were being moved from Tripoli to Benghazi, there were anti-NTC protests across the country. In the background there was the possibility of an Islamist resurgence, with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group setting up a Taliban-style government. There was a long way to go before the Libyan people would be able to enjoy real democracy. However, during the first half of 2012 the situation became calmer, and the first elections for over 40 years were able to take place in July 2012. These passed off reasonably peacefully, except in the east where supporters of a federal state were demanding more seats in the national congress. Against expectations, the moderate National Forces Alliance won a comfortable victory, and its leader, Mahmoud Jibril, who had acted as interim prime minister for a time, became president. This was in marked contrast to what had happened in Tunisia and Egypt, where Islamists gained control. Mahmoud Jibril

said he wanted to work with all parties in a grand coalition and rejected claims from some clerics that his party was too secular for the Islamists to work with. The next step was to prepare for parliamentary elections in 2013, and in the meantime the Jibril government concentrated on gaining control of the various militias still operating outside the law.

The difficulties involved in this task were clearly illustrated on 11 September 2012, the anniversary of the al-Qaeda attacks on the USA. A gang attacked the American consulate in Benghazi with guns and grenades, killing four Americans, including Chris Stevens, the American ambassador, who happened to be on a visit from Tripoli. It was believed that the attack was triggered by the showing on YouTube of the trailer for an American film called *The Innocence of Muslims*, which was extremely insulting to the prophet Muhammad. There were anti-American protests about the film in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Gaza, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iran and in most other Muslim states. It was thought that the Benghazi attack was carried out by an extremist Islamic militia called Ansar al-Sharia ('supporters of Sharia law'). The killings overshadowed an important political event that took place the following day: the Libyan parliament elected a new president, Mustafa Abu-Shakour of the National Front Party. He narrowly defeated Mahmoud Jibril, the US-backed candidate, who had been expected to win.

(e) Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, a kingdom dominated by Sunni Muslims and run under strict fundamentalist laws, the situation was rather different. There were mild protests, mainly in the east of the country where a majority of the population are Shia. On the whole the 86-year-old King Abdullah was popular, although his rule was autocratic in the extreme, and unemployment was high, especially among young men. He was quick to respond, promising a multi-billion-pound programme of reforms. A total of 60 000 new jobs were created in the security forces, a clever move which helped to reduce unemployment as well as making the regime safer. The monthly minimum wage was raised to £500 and there was to be unemployment benefit of £160 a month. Half a million apartments were to be built for people on low incomes and more money was to be given to hospitals. All this was possible because, thanks to the oil revenue, the Saudi royal family were extremely wealthy.

There was another festering grievance in Saudi Arabia – women were denied civic freedoms, were not allowed to vote or play any public role, could not leave the house unless accompanied by a male member of the family, and were not allowed to drive. In September 2011 the king announced that women would be able to vote and stand as candidates in municipal elections from 2015. They would also be able to serve as members of the Shura council, a body that supervised legislation. This was apparently warmly received, but there was disappointment that women still could not drive; Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world where women were banned from driving. A campaign was launched in which dozens of women deliberately broke the rule. One woman was arrested and sentenced to ten lashes, but King Abdullah overruled the sentence.

Things were thrown into confusion in October 2011 when Crown Prince Sultan, King Abdullah's younger half-brother and heir to the throne, died, leaving Prince Nayef as the likely successor to King Abdullah. He was in charge of the security forces, an ultra-conservative and the man responsible for sending Saudi troops into neighbouring Bahrain the previous March to help crush the pro-reform demonstrations. King Abdullah himself was in poor health and there were serious doubts about what would happen to his reforms if and when Prince Nayef took over.

And so in 2012 'the new world order' was still far from settled. The 'Arab Spring' states were in a transitional phase and it was by no means clear where they would end up. It remained to be seen whether or not the 'war of civilizations' would materialize fully,

or whether militant Islamic fundamentalism, as some predicted, would be eclipsed as moderate Muslims grew tired of its strict rules and restraints and its treatment of women. Taliban aggression in Afghanistan, where NATO troops were being killed every day, and al-Qaeda's activities in Pakistan continued to present a formidable challenge to the West. Many observers were moving towards the conclusion that dialogue between the two sides must come eventually.

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Part

II

The rise of Fascism and governments of the Right

Chapter

12 Italy, 1918–45: The first appearance of Fascism

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The unification of Italy was only completed in 1870, and the new state suffered from economic and political weaknesses. The First World War was a great strain on her economy, and there was bitter disappointment at her treatment by the Versailles settlement. Between 1919 and 1922 there were five different governments, all of which were incapable of taking the decisive action that the situation demanded. In 1919, *Benito Mussolini founded the Italian fascist party*, which won 35 seats in the 1921 elections. At the same time there seemed to be a real danger of a left-wing revolution; in an atmosphere of strikes and riots, the fascists staged a 'march on Rome', which culminated in King Victor Emmanuel inviting Mussolini to form a government (October 1922); he remained in power until July 1943.

Gradually Mussolini took on the powers of a dictator and attempted to control the entire way of life of the Italian people. At first it seemed as though his authoritarian regime might bring lasting benefits to Italy, and he won popularity with his successful foreign policy. Later he made the fatal mistake of entering the Second World War on the side of Germany (June 1940), even though he knew Italy could not afford involvement in another war. After the Italians suffered defeats by the British, who captured Italy's African possessions and occupied Sicily, they turned against Mussolini. He was deposed and arrested (July 1943), but was rescued by the Germans (September) and set up as a puppet ruler in northern Italy, backed by German troops. In April 1945, as British and American troops advanced northwards through Italy towards Milan, Mussolini tried to escape to Switzerland but was captured and shot dead by his Italian enemies (known as 'partisans'). His body was taken to Milan and strung up by the feet in a public square – an ignominious end for the man who had ruled Italy for 20 years.

12.1 WHY WAS MUSSOLINI ABLE TO COME TO POWER?

(a) Disillusionment and frustration

In the summer of 1919 there was a general atmosphere of disillusionment and frustration in Italy, caused by a combination of factors:

1 Disappointment at Italy's gains from the Versailles settlement

When Italy entered the war the Allies had promised her Trentino, the south Tyrol, Istria, Trieste, part of Dalmatia, Adalia, some Aegean islands and a protectorate over Albania. Although she was given the first four areas, the rest were awarded to other states, mainly Yugoslavia; Albania was to be independent. The Italians felt cheated in view of their valiant efforts during the war and the loss of close on 700 000 men. Particularly irritating was their failure to get Fiume (given to Yugoslavia), though in fact this was not one of

the areas which had been promised to them. Gabriele d'Annunzio, a famous romantic poet, marched with a few hundred supporters and occupied Fiume before the Yugoslavs had time to take it. Some army units deserted and supported d'Annunzio, providing him with arms and ammunition, and he began to have hopes of overthrowing the government. However, in June 1920, after d'Annunzio had held out in Fiume for 15 months, the new prime minister, Giovanni Giolitti, decided that the government's authority must be restored. He ordered the army to remove d'Annunzio from Fiume – a risky move, since he was viewed as a national hero. The army obeyed orders and d'Annunzio surrendered without a fight, but it left the government highly unpopular.

2 The economic effects of the war

The effects of the war on the economy and the standard of living were disastrous. The government had borrowed heavily, especially from the USA, and these debts now had to be repaid. As the lira declined in value (from 5 to the dollar in 1914 to 28 to the dollar in 1921) the cost of living increased accordingly by at least five times. There was massive unemployment as heavy industry cut back its wartime production levels, and 2.5 million ex-servicemen had difficulty finding jobs.

3 Growing contempt for the parliamentary system

Votes for all men and proportional representation were introduced for the 1919 elections. Although this gave a fairer representation than under the previous system, it meant that there was a large number of parties in parliament. After the election of May 1921, for example, there were at least nine parties represented, including liberals, nationalists, socialists, communists, the Catholic popular party and fascists. This made it difficult for any one party to gain an overall majority, and coalition governments were inevitable. No consistent policy was possible as five different cabinets with shaky majorities came and went. There was growing impatience with a system that seemed designed to prevent decisive government.

(b) There was a wave of strikes in 1919 and 1920

The industrialization of Italy in the years after unification led to the development of a strong socialist party and trade unions. Their way of protesting at the mess the country was in was to organize a wave of strikes in 1919 and 1920. These were accompanied by rioting, looting of shops and occupation of factories by workers. In Turin, factory councils reminiscent of the Russian soviets were appearing. In the south, socialist leagues of farm-workers seized land from wealthy landowners and set up co-operatives. The government's prestige sank even lower because of its failure to protect property; many property-owners were convinced that a left-wing revolution was at hand, especially when the Italian Communist Party was formed in January 1921. But in fact the chances of revolution were receding by then: the strikes and factory occupations were fizzling out, because although workers tried to maintain production, claiming control of the factories, it proved impossible (suppliers refused them raw materials and they needed engineers and managers). In fact the formation of the Communist Party made a revolution less likely because it split the forces of the left; nevertheless the fear of a revolution remained strong.

(c) Mussolini attracted widespread support

Mussolini and the fascist party were attractive to many sections of society because as he himself said, he aimed to rescue Italy from feeble government and give the country a

political system that would provide stable and strong government. Mussolini (born 1883), the son of a blacksmith in the Romagna, had a varied early career, working for a time as a stonemason's mate and then as a primary-school teacher. Politically he began as a socialist and made a name for himself as a journalist, becoming editor of the socialist newspaper *Avanti*. He fell out with the socialists because they were against Italian intervention in the war, and started his own paper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*. In 1919 he founded the fascist party with a socialist and republican programme, and he showed sympathy with the factory occupations of 1919–20. The local party branches were known as *fasci di combattimento* (fighting groups) – the word *fasces* meant the bundle of rods with protruding axe which used to symbolize the authority and power of the ancient Roman consuls. At this stage the fascists were anti-monarchy, anti-Church and anti-big business.

The new party won no seats in the 1919 elections; this, plus the failure of the factory occupations, caused Mussolini to change course. He came out as the defender of private enterprise and property, thus attracting much-needed financial support from wealthy business interests. Beginning in late 1920, black-shirted squads of fascists regularly attacked and burned down local socialist headquarters and newspaper offices and beat up socialist councillors. By the end of 1921, even though his political programme was vague in the extreme, he had gained the support of property-owners in general, because they saw him as a guarantee of law and order and as a protector of their property (especially after the formation of the Communist Party in January 1921). Having won over big business, Mussolini began to make conciliatory speeches about the Roman Catholic Church; Pope Pius XI swung the Church into line behind Mussolini, seeing him as a good anti-communist weapon. When Mussolini announced that he had dropped the republican part of his programme (September 1922), even the king began to look more favourably on the fascists. In the space of three years Mussolini had swung from the extreme left to the extreme right. Some of the working class supported the fascists, though probably a majority, especially among industrial workers, supported parties of the left.

(d) Lack of effective opposition

The anti-fascist groups failed to co-operate with each other and made no determined efforts to keep the fascists out. The communists refused to co-operate with the socialists, and Giovanni Giolitti (prime minister from June 1920 to July 1921) held the elections of May 1921 in the hope that the fascists, still unrepresented in parliament, would win some seats and then support his government. He was willing to overlook their violence, feeling that they would become more responsible once they were in parliament. However, they won only 35 seats whereas the socialists took 123. Clearly there should have been no question of a fascist takeover, though the number of fascist squads throughout the country was increasing rapidly. The socialists must take much of the blame for refusing to work with the government to curb fascist violence; a coalition of Giolitti's nationalist bloc and the socialists could have made a reasonably stable government, thus excluding the fascists. But the socialists would not co-operate, and this caused Giolitti to resign in exasperation and despair. The socialists tried to use the situation to their own advantage by calling a general strike in the summer of 1922.

(e) The attempted general strike, summer 1922

This played into the hands of the fascists, who were able to use it to their advantage: they announced that if the government failed to quell the strike, they would crush it themselves. When the strike failed through lack of support, Mussolini was able to pose as *the saviour*

of the nation from communism, and by October 1922 the fascists felt confident enough to stage their 'march on Rome'. As about 50 000 blackshirts converged on the capital, while others occupied important towns in the north, the prime minister, Luigi Facta, was prepared to resist. But King Victor Emmanuel III refused to declare a state of emergency and instead, invited Mussolini, who had remained nervously in Milan, to come to Rome and form a new government, which he obligingly did, arriving by train. Afterwards the fascists fostered the myth that they had seized power in a heroic struggle, but it had been achieved legally by the mere threat of force, while the army and the police stood aside.

The role of the king was important: he made the crucial decision not to use the army to stop the blackshirts, though many historians believe that the regular army would have had little difficulty in dispersing the disorderly and poorly armed squads, many of which arrived by train. The march was an enormous bluff which came off. The reasons why the king decided against armed resistance remain something of a mystery, since he was apparently reluctant to discuss them. Suggestions include:

- lack of confidence in Facta;
- doubts about whether the army, with its fascist sympathies, could be relied on to obey orders;
- fears of a long civil war if the army failed to crush the fascists quickly.

There is no doubt that the king had a certain amount of sympathy with the fascist aim of providing strong government, and he was also afraid that some of the generals might force him to abdicate in favour of his cousin, the duke of Aosta, who openly supported the fascists. Whatever the king's motives, the outcome was clear: Mussolini became the first-ever fascist premier in history.

12.2 WHAT DID THE TERM 'FASCISM' STAND FOR?

It is important to try to define what the term 'fascist' stood for, because it was later applied to other regimes and rulers, such as Hitler, Franco (Spain), Salazar (Portugal) and Perón (Argentina), which were sometimes quite different from the Italian version of fascism. Nowadays there is a tendency among the left to label as 'fascist' anybody who holds right-wing views. The fact that fascism never produced a great theoretical writer who could explain its philosophies clearly in the way that Marx did for communism makes it difficult to pin down exactly what was involved. Mussolini's constantly changing aims before 1923 suggest that his main concern was simply to acquire power; after that he seems to have improvised his ideas as he went along. It eventually emerged that the type of fascism that Mussolini had in mind included certain basic features:

- *A stable and authoritarian government*. The Italian fascist movement was a reaction to the crisis situation outlined above that made stable democratic government impossible, just at the time when strong and decisive leadership was needed. An authoritarian government would arouse and mobilize the great mass of ordinary people, and would control as many aspects of people's lives as possible, with strong discipline. One aspect of this was *the 'corporate state'*. This was a way of promoting efficiency by setting up a separate organization of workers and employers for each branch of the economy. Each 'corporation' had a government official attached to it. In practice it was a good way of controlling the workforce.
- *Extreme nationalism*. An emphasis on the rebirth of the nation after a period of decline; building up the greatness and prestige of the state, with the implication that one's own nation is superior to all others.

- *A one-party state was essential*. There was no place for democratic debate, because that made decisive government impossible and held up progress. Only fascism could provide the necessary dynamic action to guarantee Italy a great future. It also involved the cult of the great charismatic leader who would guide and inspire the nation to great things. Mussolini did not see himself as a prime minister or president – instead he took the title *il Duce* ('the leader'), in the same way that Hitler called himself *Führer*. Fascism was especially hostile to communism, which explains much of its popularity with big business and the wealthy.
- *Economic self-sufficiency (autarky)*. This was vitally important in developing the greatness of the state; the government must therefore direct the economic life of the nation (though not in the Marxist sense of the state owning factories and land).
- *Great use was made of all the latest modern forms of propaganda* – uniforms, marches, songs and displays, all to demonstrate that fascists were a completely new and dynamic alternative to the boring, old-fashioned traditional parties, and to mobilize mass support behind the heroic leader.
- *Military strength and violence* were an integral part of the fascist way of life. In domestic affairs they were prepared to use extreme violence against opponents. Mussolini himself also gave the impression that they would pursue an aggressive foreign policy; he once remarked: 'Peace is absurd: fascism does not believe in it.' Hence the Italian fascists fostered the myth that they had seized power by force, when in fact Mussolini had been invited to form a government by the king.

12.3 MUSSOLINI TRIES TO INTRODUCE THE FASCIST STATE

There was no sudden change in the system of government and state institutions; at first Mussolini was merely the prime minister of a coalition cabinet in which only four out of twelve ministers were fascists, and he had to move cautiously. However, the king had given him special powers to last until the end of 1923, to deal with the crisis. His blackshirt private army was legalized, becoming the National State Voluntary Militia (MVSN). The Accerbo Law (November 1923) changed the rules of general elections. From now on the party which got most votes in a general election would automatically be given two-thirds of the seats in parliament. As a result of the next election (April 1924), the fascists and their supporters came out with 404 seats while the opposition parties could manage only 107. The right-wing success can be explained partly by the general desire for a strong government which would put the country back on its feet again, after the weak minority governments of the preceding years. But there is no doubt that there was a good deal of violence and fraud during the election which prevented many people from voting freely.

Beginning in the summer of 1924, using a mixture of violence and intimidation, and helped by divisions among his opponents, Mussolini gradually developed Italian government and society along fascist lines. At the same time he consolidated his own hold over the country, which was largely complete, at least politically, by 1930. However, he still seems to have had no 'revolutionary' ideas about how to change Italy for the better; in fact it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that his main interest was simply to increase his own personal power by whatever methods were appropriate at the time.

(a) Only the fascist party was allowed

Persistent opponents of the regime were either exiled or murdered, the most notorious case being the murder of Giacomo Matteotti, the socialist leader in the Italian parliament, who was stabbed to death. Soon after the 1924 election Matteotti made a speech in parliament

complaining about the fraud and violence, and demanding that the election be declared invalid. Mussolini was furious, and there can be little doubt that he was responsible for having Matteotti killed. Later, another opposition leader, the liberal-conservative Giovanni Amendola, was beaten to death by fascist thugs. The fascists' popularity levels slumped dramatically in the aftermath of these outrages; the party seemed likely to split, as many moderates felt that their tactics had gone too far. Even Mussolini thought his regime was likely to be overthrown. However, nobody seemed to have the nerve to take the lead and try to unite the opposition against the fascists. Mussolini survived, partly because he was still seen as a guarantee against a communist and socialist takeover. After 1926, when Mussolini felt more secure, violence was much reduced and the Italian system was never as brutal as the Nazi regime in Germany.

Further changes in the constitution meant that:

- the prime minister (Mussolini) was responsible only to the king, not to parliament (1925);
- the prime minister could rule by decree, which meant that new laws did not need to be discussed by parliament (1926);
- the electorate was reduced from about 10 million to 3 million (the wealthiest).

Although parliament still met, all important decisions were taken by the Fascist Grand Council, which always did as Mussolini told it. In effect Mussolini, who now adopted the title *il Duce*, was a dictator.

(b) Changes in local government

Elected town councils and mayors were abolished and towns were run by officials appointed from Rome. In practice the local fascist party bosses (known as *ras*) often had as much power as the government officials.

(c) Education supervised

Education in schools and universities was closely supervised. Teachers had to wear uniforms and take an oath of loyalty to the regime; new textbooks were written to glorify the fascist system. Children were encouraged to criticize any teachers who lacked enthusiasm for the party. Children and young people were encouraged to join government youth organizations such as the *Gioventu Italiana del Littorio (GIL)*; this had branches for both boys and girls aged 6 to 21 and organized sports and military parades. Then there was a special organization for young boys aged 6 to 8 known as 'Sons of the Wolf' which also tried to indoctrinate them with the brilliance of the *Duce* and the glories of war. From 1937 membership of one of these organizations was compulsory. The other main message emphasized was total obedience to authority; this was deemed necessary because everything was seen in terms of struggle – 'Believe, Obey, Fight!'

(d) Employment policies

The 'Corporate State' was one of the key elements of the Fascist system. The government claimed that it was designed to promote co-operation between employers and workers and to end class warfare. Fascist-controlled unions had the sole right to negotiate for the workers, and both unions and employers' associations were organized into corporations, and

were expected to work together to settle disputes over pay and working conditions. Strikes and lockouts were not allowed. By 1934 there were 22 corporations each dealing with a separate industry; each one included a government official among its members, and there was a minister of corporations in charge of the whole system. Mussolini himself acted as the first minister of corporations from 1926 until 1929. In this way Mussolini hoped to control workers and direct production and the economy. To compensate for their loss of freedom, workers were assured of such benefits as free Sundays, annual holidays with pay, social security, sports and theatre facilities and cheap tours and holidays.

(e) An understanding was reached with the pope

The Papacy had been hostile to the Italian government since 1870 when all the territory belonging to the Papacy (Papal States) had been incorporated in the new kingdom of Italy. Though he had been sympathetic towards Mussolini in 1922, Pope Pius XI disapproved of the increasing totalitarianism of fascist government (the fascist youth organizations, for example, clashed with the Catholic scouts). Mussolini, who was probably an atheist himself, was nevertheless well aware of the power of the Roman Catholic Church, and he put himself out to win over Pius, who, as the Duce well knew, was obsessed with the fear of communism. The result was *the Lateran Treaty of 1929*, by which Italy recognized the Vatican City as a sovereign state, paid the pope a large sum of money as compensation for all his losses, accepted the Catholic faith as the official state religion, made religious instruction compulsory in all schools and left the Church free to continue its spiritual mission without interference from the government. In return the Papacy recognized the kingdom of Italy, and promised not to interfere in politics. *Some historians see the ending of the long breach between Church and State as Mussolini's most lasting and worthwhile achievement*.

(f) Propaganda and censorship

Great importance was attached to propaganda in the attempt to brainwash the Italian people into accepting fascist values and culture. The government tried, with some success, to keep a close control over the press, radio, theatre and the cinema. Strict press censorship was enforced: anti-fascist newspapers and magazines were banned or their editors were replaced by fascist supporters. A Ministry of Popular Culture was set up in 1937 to master-mind the campaign to spread the fascist message, suggesting perhaps that for the last 15 years the campaign had been less successful than had been hoped. The main points for emphasis were the cult of Mussolini, the hero and the man of action, always in uniform; and the celebration of military greatness. People were bombarded with slogans such as 'Mussolini is always right.' The military glories of ancient Rome were constantly extolled, with the implication that fascism would bring more military glory.

(g) Racial policy

For much of his time in power Mussolini showed little interest in any so-called problems to do with race**.** He had certainly not shown any signs of anti-Jewishness. At one time he had even encouraged Zionism because he thought it might be useful for embarrassing the British. Many leading members of the fascist party were Jews, and he had several times insisted that there was no such thing as a Jewish problem in Italy. He was very critical of the Nazis' anti-Semitism. On the other hand he had also claimed that certain races

were superior to others. He suggested that the Italians belonged to an Aryan race that was superior to such nationalities as Spaniards and Greeks, as well as to the Africans in the Italian territories of Abyssinia and Libya. He seemed to be more worried about what he called the 'Levantines', by which he meant the slaves brought in during the time of the Roman Empire. He was afraid that as their descendants intermarried with the pure Aryans over many generations, a wrong impression of the Italian national character would be given to the rest of the world. As late as September 1937 he said that the Jews in Italy were no problem; after all, there were at most only about 70 000 of them. In the summer of 1939, however, Mussolini announced the introduction of anti-Jewish laws on the same lines as the Nazi laws. In view of his earlier pronouncements, most people were shocked by this sudden change. The reasons for the change were simple. Following the hostile reception from France and Britain of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 and their imposition of economic sanctions on Italy, Mussolini found himself being pushed towards an alliance with Hitler. In 1936 he reached an understanding with Hitler, known as the Rome–Berlin Axis, and in 1937 he joined the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Japan, which was directed against Communism. After a four-day visit to Germany in 1937 Mussolini realized the political expediency of aligning Italy with Germany as closely as possible. As he moved towards the full alliance with Germany – the Pact of Steel – signed in May 1939, Mussolini moved quickly to emulate Hitler, in what was simply a cynical, tactical move. There was another motive for the policy change, or so

How totalitarian was Mussolini's system?

It seems clear that in spite of his efforts *Mussolini did not succeed in creating a completely totalitarian system* in the Fascist sense of there being 'no individuals or groups not controlled by the state'; nor was it as all-pervasive as the Nazi state in Germany. He never completely eliminated the influence of the king or the pope. In spite of the cult of Mussolini as il Duce, the king remained head of state, and was able to dismiss Mussolini in 1943. The Roman Catholic Church remained an extremely powerful institution and it provided the Italian people with an alternative focus of loyalty; there was no way that Mussolini could sideline it, and there were several clashes between the two even after the signing of the Lateran Treaty. The pope became highly critical of Mussolini when he began to persecute Jews in the later 1930s. The historian and philosopher Benedetto Croce and other university professors were constant critics of fascism and yet they survived, apparently because Mussolini was afraid of hostile foreign reaction if he had them arrested. They would certainly not have been tolerated in Nazi Germany. A more accurate description of Mussolini's system would be authoritarian rather than totalitarian. Even fascist sympathizers admitted that the corporative system was not a success either in controlling production or in eliminating class warfare. According to historian Elizabeth Wiskemann, 'on the whole the big industrialists only made gestures of submission and in fact bought their freedom from the fascist state by generous subscriptions to Fascist party funds'. Most of the important decisions on the economy were taken by the government in consultation with business leaders, and the workers themselves had very little say. It was the workers who had to make all the concessions – agree not to strike and give up their own trade unions – while the big employers enjoyed considerable freedom of action. In fact the corporate state was little more than a propaganda exercise and a way of controlling the workers. As far as the mass of the population was concerned, it seems that they were prepared to tolerate fascism while it appeared to bring benefits, but soon grew tired of it when its inadequacies were revealed by its failures during the Second World War.

Mussolini claimed: the possession of territory in Africa (Abyssinia and Libya) meant that it was important for Italians to emphasize their domination over Africans and Arabs, and make sure that they showed the respect due to people of a superior race. In July 1938 the Charter of Race was published which claimed that Arabs, Africans *and Jews* were all inferior races. He began by urging people not to employ Jews and to sack those already in jobs. Then the press were told to report that Jews had managed to get themselves into important and influential positions and must be ousted before they sent Italy into decline. This policy was not popular with the general public, but when the pope protested strongly, the press was ordered to print articles justifying the persecution of Jews and to ignore the pope. As the Second World War got under way Mussolini appointed Giovanni Prezioso, a well-known journalist and virulent anti-Semite, to supervise the racial policy. They agreed that all Jews must be expelled from Europe. Although they knew that the Nazis were systematically murdering Jews, including women and children, they still ordered thousands of Italian Jews to be deported to Germany. Again this policy was extremely unpopular and some officials either sabotaged orders or simply refused to carry them out.

12.4 WHAT BENEFITS DID FASCISM BRING FOR THE ITALIAN PEOPLE?

What really mattered to ordinary people was whether the regime's policies were effective or not. Did Mussolini rescue Italy from weak government as he had promised, or was he, as some of his critics alleged at the time, just a windbag whose government was as corrupt and inefficient as previous ones?

(a) A promising beginning

Much of fascist policy was concerned with the economy, though Mussolini knew very little about economics. The big drive was for self-sufficiency (*autarky*), which was thought to be essential for a 'warrior-nation'. A great nation must not be dependent on any other nations for vital commodities like raw materials and food supplies. He liked to see things in terms of struggle – hence the various 'Battles', for the lira, for wheat and for births. The early years seemed to be successful, or so the government propaganda told people.

- *Industry was encouraged* with government subsidies where necessary, so that iron and steel production doubled by 1930 and artificial silk production increased tenfold. By 1937, production of hydro-electric power had doubled.
- *The 'Battle for the Lira'*. Mussolini believed that Italy must have a strong currency if it wanted to be a strong state. He revalued the lira at 90 to the pound sterling instead of 150 (1926). This had mixed results: it helped some industries, notably steel and chemicals, by making imported raw materials cheaper. But unfortunately it made Italian exports more expensive on the world market and led to reduced orders, especially in the cotton industry. Many factories were on a three-day week and workers suffered wage reductions of between 10 and 20 per cent – *before* the world economic crisis that started in 1929.
- *The 'Battle for Wheat'* encouraged farmers to concentrate on wheat production and raised tariffs (import duties) on imported wheat as part of the drive for self-sufficiency. Again this had mixed results: by 1935, wheat imports had been cut by 75 per cent, and Italy was close to achieving self-sufficiency in wheat production. This policy was popular with the wealthy cereal-growing farmers of the north; but time showed that there were some unexpected side effects (see below).

- *The 'Battle for Births'*, launched in 1927, was a campaign to increase the birth rate. Mussolini believed that a population of 40 million was too small for a country aiming to be a great power; they simply wouldn't have enough soldiers! The target was to double the birth rate and raise the population to 60 million by 1950; this was to be achieved by taxing unmarried men heavily, giving tax relief and promotion at work for men with large families and paying generous family allowances. There were severe penalties for abortions. He specified 12 children as the ideal number for a family. This was one of Mussolini's complete failures. Apparently young married couples did not find this package attractive enough, and the birth rate actually fell.
- *A programme of land reclamation was launched* in 1928, involving draining marshes, irrigation and planting forests in mountainous areas, again as part of the drive to improve and increase agricultural yield. The great showpiece were the reclaimed Pontine Marshes near Rome.
- *An impressive public works programme* was designed, among other things to reduce unemployment. It included the building of motorways, bridges, blocks of flats, railway stations, sports stadiums, schools and new towns on reclaimed land; a start was made on electrifying main railway lines, and the great fascist boast was that Mussolini had made the trains run on time. Even sportsmen did well under fascism – the Italian soccer team won the World Cup twice – in 1934 and 1938!
- *The 'after-work'* (Dopolavoro) *organization* provided the Italian people with things to do in their leisure time. There were cheap holidays, tours and cruises, and *Dopolavoro* controlled theatres, dramatic societies, libraries, orchestras, brass bands and sporting organizations. Mobile cinemas were provided which were useful for putting out propaganda. Very poor families could get welfare support from *Dopolavoro.* All this was partly to appease the workers for the loss of their trade unions and the right to strike, and it was genuinely popular. However, most historians seem to agree that, as a propaganda exercise, it failed to arouse genuine enthusiasm for the fascist system.
- To promote the image of Italy as a great power, Mussolini pursued a virile foreign policy, although in the later 1920s and early 1930s he was much more cautious.

However, the promise of the early years of Mussolini's rule was in many ways never fulfilled.

(b) Unsolved problems

Even before Italy became involved in the Second World War, it was clear that fascism had not solved many of her problems.

- *Little had been done to remedy Italy's basic shortage of raw materials* – coal and oil – and much more effort could have been made to develop hydro-electric power. In spite of the modest increase in iron and steel production, Italy could not even match a small state like Belgium (see Table 12.1). By 1940 it was clear that Italy had failed to become self-sufficient in coal, oil and steel, which was essential if Mussolini was serious about waging war. This failure meant that Italy became increasingly dependent economically on Nazi Germany.
- *Although the 'Battle of Wheat' was a victory*, *it was achieved only at the expense of dairy and arable farming*, whose output fell; the climate in the south is suited

much better to grazing and orchards than to growing wheat, and these would have been much more lucrative for the farmers. As a result, agriculture remained inefficient and farm labourers the poorest class in the country. Their wages fell by between 20 and 40 per cent during the 1930s. Italy still had what is known as a 'dualist economy' – the north was industrial and comparatively prosperous, while the south was largely agricultural, backward and poverty-stricken. In 1940 the wealthiest 1 per cent of the population still owned 40 per cent of all the land. The attempt at self-sufficiency had been a dismal failure. More than that, it had caused an unpopular shortage of consumer goods and had greatly increased Italy's national debt.

- *The Great Depression, which began in 1929 with the Wall Street Crash in the USA, made matters worse*. Exports fell further and unemployment rose to 1.1 million, yet the Duce refused to devalue the lira until 1936. Instead, wages and salaries were cut, and although the cost of living was falling because of the Depression, wages fell more than prices, so that workers suffered a fall of over 10 per cent in real wages. Particularly frustrating for industrial workers was that they had no way of protesting, since strikes were illegal and the unions weak. The economy was also hampered by the sanctions placed on Italy by the League of Nations after the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. Some banks were in difficulties because struggling manufactures were unable to repay their loans.
- *Another failing of the government was in social services*, where there was nothing approaching a 'welfare state'. There was no official government health insurance until 1943, and only an inadequate unemployment insurance scheme, which was not improved even during the Depression.
- *The regime was inefficient and corrupt*, so that many of its policies were not carried out. For example, in spite of all the publicity about the land reclamation, only about one-tenth of the programme had been carried out by 1939 and work was at a standstill even before the war began. Immense sums of money disappeared into the pockets of corrupt officials. Part of the problem was that Mussolini tried increasingly to do everything himself; he refused to delegate because he wanted total control. But it was impossible for one man to do so much, and it placed an intolerable burden on him. According to his biographer Dennis Mack Smith, 'by trying to control everything, he ended by controlling very little … although he gave out a constant stream of orders, he had no way of checking that they were carried out. As officials knew this, they often only pretended to obey, and took no action at all.'

Table 12.1 **Italian iron and steel output (in million tons)**

	Iron			*Steel*		
	1918	1930	1940	1918	1930	1940
Italy	0.3	0.5	1.0	0.3	0.5	1.0
Belgium	–	3.4	1.8	–	3.4	1.9
Germany	11.9	9.7	13.9	15.0	11.5	19.0
USA	39.7	32.3	43.0	45.2	41.4	60.8

12.5 OPPOSITION AND DOWNFALL

The conclusion has to be that after the first flush of enthusiasm for Mussolini and his new system, the average Italian can have felt little lasting benefit from the regime, and disenchantment had probably set in long before the Second World War started. And yet there was not a great deal of overt opposition to him. This was partly because it was difficult to conduct an organized opposition in parliament, and there were heavy punishments for opponents and critics; fear of the political police tended to drive serious opposition underground, though they were much less repressive and brutal than Hitler's Gestapo. Also the Italians had a tradition of accepting whatever happened politically with a minimum of fuss and lots of resignation. In spite of all the problems, Mussolini could usually rely on the support of the traditional elites – the king and aristocracy, and wealthy landlords and industrialists, because he was their best insurance against the communists. The government continued to control the media, which kept on telling people that Mussolini was a hero.

(a) Why was Mussolini eventually overthrown?

- *Entry into the Second World War on Germany's side was a disastrous mistake*. The majority of Italians were against it; they already disapproved when Mussolini began to sack Jews from important jobs (1938), and they felt that Italy was becoming a German satellite. The Italian takeover of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) was popular with the public, though they had made heavy weather of that. But the Second World War was a different matter altogether. Mussolini had failed to modernize the economy sufficiently to support a prolonged war; in fact, Italy was incapable of waging a major war; the army was equipped with obsolete rifles and artillery; there were only a thousand planes and no heavy tanks. The declaration of war on the USA (December 1941) horrified many of Mussolini's right-wing supporters (such as industrialists and bankers), who resented the closer economic controls which wartime brought. As for the general public, Mussolini had failed to convert them to his aims of European war and conquest. All the propaganda about reviving the glories of ancient Rome had failed to arouse any fighting spirit or military enthusiasm.
- *The general public suffered hardships*. Taxes were increased to pay for the war, there was food rationing, massive inflation and a 30 per cent fall in real wages. After November 1942 there were British bombing raids on major cities. By March 1943, unrest showed itself in strikes in Milan and Turin, the first since 1922.
- After a few early successes, *the Italians suffered a string of defeats* culminating in the surrender of all Italian troops in North Africa (May 1943).
- *Mussolini seemed to have lost his touch*. He was suffering from a stomach ulcer and nervous strain. All he could think of was to sack some of the ministers who had criticized him. Breaking point came with the Allied capture of Sicily (July 1943). Many of the fascist leaders themselves realized the lunacy of trying to continue the war, but Mussolini refused to make peace because that would have meant deserting Hitler. The Fascist Grand Council turned against Mussolini, and the king dismissed him. Nobody lifted a finger to save him, and fascism disappeared.

(b) Verdict on Italian fascism

This is still a very controversial topic in Italy, where memories of personal experiences are strong. Broadly speaking *there are two interpretations of the fascist era*.

- It was a temporary aberration (a departure from normal development) in Italian history, the work solely of Mussolini; historian A. Cassels calls it 'a gigantic confidence trick perpetrated on the Italian nation by Benito Mussolini – an artificial creation of Mussolini'.
- Fascism grew naturally from Italian history; the environment and the circumstances shaped the rise and success of fascism, not the reverse.

Most historians now accept the second theory, that the roots of fascism lay in traditional Italian society and that the movement grew to fruition in the circumstances after the First World War. The Italian historian Renzo de Felice argued that fascism was primarily a movement of 'an emerging middle class', which was keen to challenge the traditional, liberal, ruling class for power. He claimed that the movement achieved a great deal – especially the modernizing of Italy's economy, which was very backward in 1918. On the other hand, British historian Martin Blinkhorn does not accept this claim about the economy and argues that de Felice has not paid enough attention to 'the negative and brutal side of Fascism'.

The most recent revisionist trend among Italian historians is to portray Mussolini once more as an inspirational leader who could do nothing wrong until he made the fatal mistake of entering the Second World War. There is a tendency to gloss over all the outrages of Italian fascism, with an element of nostalgia. A new biography by British writer Nicholas Farrell, published in 2003, takes the same line, arguing that Mussolini deserves to be remembered as a great man. He claims that not only did Mussolini save Italy from anarchy and communist subversion, but his domestic policies brought great benefits to the Italian people and improved their living standards. Other genuine successes were the ending of the historic quarrel between the Roman Catholic Church and the state and the popular *Dopolavoro,* which continued after the war under another name. Farrell also suggests that if Britain and France had handled Mussolini with more care in the years 1935 to 1940, he might well have been persuaded to join the allied side during the Second World War. After all, in 1934 when Hitler made his first attempt to take over Austria, Mussolini was the only European leader to stand up to Hitler. There is no knowing how much bloodshed might have been avoided if this had happened. Farrell even suggests that if Anthony Eden, the British foreign secretary, had not shown such anti-Italian prejudice, the Second World War might have been avoided.

This interpretation provoked mixed reviews. Some welcomed it as a long overdue revision of the dictator's career, though the majority were critical, finding Farrell's arguments unconvincing. Most were more likely to go along with the verdict of the great Italian historian Benedetto Croce, who dismissed fascism as 'a short-term moral infection'.

FURTHER READING

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Chapter

13 Germany, 1918–45: The Weimar Republic and Hitler

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

As Germany moved towards defeat in 1918, public opinion turned against the government, and in October, the Kaiser, in a desperate bid to hang on to power, appointed Prince Max of Baden as Chancellor. He was known to be in favour of a more democratic form of government in which parliament had more power. But it was too late: in November revolution broke out, the Kaiser escaped to Holland and abdicated, and Prince Max resigned. Friedrich Ebert, leader of the left-wing Social Democrat Party (SPD), became head of the government. In January 1919 a general election was held, the first completely democratic one ever to take place in Germany. The Social Democrats emerged as the largest single party and Ebert became the first president of the republic. They had some Marxist ideas but believed that the way to achieve socialism was through parliamentary democracy.

The new government was by no means popular with all Germans: even before the elections the communists had attempted to seize power in *the Spartacist Rising (January 1919)*. In 1920, right-wing enemies of the republic occupied Berlin (the Kapp *Putsch*). The government managed to survive these threats and several later ones, including *Hitler's Munich Beer-Hall Putsch (1923)*.

By the end of 1919 a new constitution had been agreed by the National Assembly (parliament), which was meeting in Weimar because Berlin was still torn by political unrest. This Weimar constitution (sometimes called the most perfect democratic constitution of modern times, at least on paper) gave its name to *the Weimar Republic*, and lasted until 1933, when it was destroyed by Hitler. It passed through three phases:

- *1919 to the end of 1923* A period of instability and crisis during which the republic was struggling to survive.
- *From the end of 1923 to the end of 1929* A period of stability in which Gustav Stresemann was the leading politician. Thanks to *the Dawes Plan of 1924*, by which the USA provided huge loans, Germany seemed to be recovering from her defeat and was enjoying an industrial boom.
- *October 1929 to January 1933* Instability again; the world economic crisis, beginning with the Wall Street Crash in October 1929, soon had disastrous effects on Germany, producing six and a half million unemployed. The government was unable to cope with the situation and by the end of 1932 the Weimar Republic seemed on the verge of collapse.

Meanwhile Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis – NSDAP) had been carrying out a great propaganda campaign blaming the government for all the ills of Germany, and setting out Nazi solutions to the problems. In January 1933, President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor, and soon afterwards Hitler saw to it that democracy ceased to exist; the Weimar Republic was at an end, and from then until

April 1945, Hitler was the dictator of Germany. Only defeat in the Second World War and the death of Hitler (30 April 1945) freed the German people from the Nazi tyranny.

13.1 WHY DID THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC FAIL?

(a) It began with serious disadvantages

- *It had accepted the humiliating and unpopular Versailles Treaty*, with its arms limitations, reparations and war-guilt clause, and was therefore always associated with defeat and dishonour. German nationalists could never forgive it for that.
- *There was a traditional lack of respect for democratic government* and a great admiration for the army and the 'officer class' as the rightful leaders of Germany. In 1919 the view was widespread that the army had not been defeated: it had been betrayed – 'stabbed in the back' – by the democrats, who had needlessly agreed to the Versailles Treaty. What most Germans did not realize was that it was General Ludendorff who had asked for an armistice while the Kaiser was still in power. However, the 'stab in the back' legend was eagerly fostered by all enemies of the republic.
- *The parliamentary system introduced in the new Weimar constitution had weaknesses*, the most serious of which was that it was based on a system of proportional representation, so that all political groups would be fairly represented. Unfortunately there were so many different groups that no party could ever win an overall majority. For example, in 1928 the *Reichstag* (lower house of parliament) contained at least eight groups, of which the largest were the Social Democrats with 153 seats, the German National Party (DNVP) with 73, and the Catholic Centre Party (Zentrum) with 62. The German Communist Party (KPD) had 54 seats, while the German People's party (DVP – Stresemann's liberal party) had 45. The smallest groups were the Bavarian People's Party with 16, and the National Socialists, who only had 12 seats. A succession of coalition governments was inevitable, with the Social Democrats having to rely on co-operation from left-wing liberals and the Catholic Centre. No party was able to carry out its programme.
- *The political parties had very little experience of how to operate a democratic parliamentary system*, because before 1919 the Reichstag had not controlled policy; the Chancellor had the final authority and was the one who really ruled the country. Under the Weimar constitution it was the other way round – the Chancellor was responsible to the Reichstag, which had the final say. However, the Reichstag usually failed to give a clear lead because the parties had not learned the art of compromise. The communists and nationalists did not believe in democracy anyway, and refused to support the Social Democrats. The communist refusal to work with the SPD meant that no strong government of the left was possible. Disagreements became so bitter that some of the parties organized their own private armies, for self-defence to begin with, but this increased the threat of civil war. The combination of these weaknesses led to more outbreaks of violence and attempts to overthrow the republic.

(b) Outbreaks of violence

1 The Spartacist Rising

In January 1919 the communists tried to seize power in what became known as *the Spartacist Rising* (Spartacus was a Roman who led a revolt of slaves in 71 BC). Inspired

by the recent success of the Russian Revolution, and led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, they occupied almost every major city in Germany. In Berlin, President Ebert found himself besieged in the Chancellery. The government managed to defeat the communists only because it accepted the help of the *Freikorps*. These were independent volunteer regiments raised by anti-communist ex-army officers. It was a sign of the government's weakness that it had to depend on private forces, which it did not itself control. The two communist leaders did not receive a fair trial – they were simply clubbed to death by *Freikorps* members.

2 The Kapp Putsch (March 1920)

This was an attempt by right-wing groups to seize power. It was sparked off when the government tried to disband the *Freikorps* private armies. They refused to disband and declared Dr Wolfgang Kapp as Chancellor. Berlin was occupied by a *Freikorps* regiment and the cabinet fled to Dresden. The German army (*Reichswehr*) took no action against the *Putsch* (coup, or rising) because the generals were in sympathy with the political right. In the end the workers of Berlin came to the aid of the Social Democrat government by calling a general strike, which paralysed the capital. Kapp resigned and the government regained control. However, it was so weak that nobody was punished except Kapp, who was imprisoned, and it took two months to get the *Freikorps* disbanded. Even then the ex-members remained hostile to the republic and many later joined Hitler's private armies.

3 A series of political assassinations took place

These were mainly carried out by ex-*Freikorps* members. Victims included Walter Rathenau (the Jewish Foreign Minister) and Gustav Erzberger (leader of the armistice delegation). When the government sought strong measures against such acts of terrorism, there was great opposition from the right-wing parties, who sympathized with the criminals. Whereas the communist leaders had been brutally murdered, the courts let right-wing offenders off lightly and the government was unable to intervene. In fact, throughout Germany, the legal and teaching professions, the civil service and the *Reichswehr* tended to be anti-Weimar, which was a crippling handicap for the republic.

4 Hitler's Beer-Hall Putsch

Another threat to the government occurred in November 1923 in Bavaria, at a time when there was much public annoyance at the French occupation of the Ruhr and the disastrous fall in the value of the mark. Hitler, helped by General Ludendorff, aimed to take control of the Bavarian state government in Munich, and then lead a national revolution to overthrow the government in Berlin. However, the police easily broke up Hitler's march, and the 'Beer-Hall *Putsch*' (so-called because the march set out from the Munich beer hall in which Hitler had announced his 'national revolution' the previous evening) soon fizzled out. Hitler was sentenced to five years' imprisonment but served only nine months (because the Bavarian authorities had some sympathy with his aims).

5 Private armies expand

The violence died down during the years 1924 to 1929 as the republic became more stable, but when unemployment grew in the early 1930s, *the private armies expanded* and regular street fights occurred, usually between Nazis and communists. All parties had their meetings broken up by rival armies and the police seemed powerless to prevent it happening.

All this showed that the government was incapable of keeping law and order, and respect for it dwindled. An increasing number of people began to favour a return to strong, authoritarian government, which would maintain strict public order.

(c) Economic problems

Probably the crucial cause of the failure of the republic was the economic problems which plagued it constantly and which it proved incapable of solving permanently.

- *In 1919 Germany was close to bankruptcy* because of the enormous expense of the war, which had lasted much longer than most people expected.
- *Attempts to pay reparations instalments made matters worse*. In August 1921, after paying the £50 million due, Germany requested permission to suspend payments until her economy recovered. France refused, and in 1922 the Germans claimed they were unable to make the full annual payment.
- *In January 1923 French troops occupied the Ruhr* (an important German industrial area) in an attempt to seize goods from factories and mines. The German government ordered the workers to follow a policy of passive resistance, and German industry in the Ruhr was paralysed. The French had failed in their aim, but the effect on the German economy was catastrophic – galloping inflation and the collapse of the mark. The rate of exchange at the end of the war was 20 marks to the dollar, but even before the Ruhr occupation, reparations difficulties had caused the mark to fall in value. Table 13.1 shows the disastrous decline in the mark.

By November 1923 the value of the mark was falling so rapidly that a worker paid in mark notes had to spend them immediately: if he waited until the following day, his notes would be worthless. It was only when the new Chancellor, Gustav Stresemann, introduced a new currency known as the *Rentenmark*, in 1924, that the financial situation finally stabilized.

This financial disaster had profound effects on German society: the working classes were badly hit – wages failed to keep pace with inflation and trade union funds were wiped out. Worst affected were the middle classes and small capitalists, who lost their savings; many began to look towards the Nazis for improvement. On the other hand, landowners and industrialists came out of the crisis well, because they still owned their material wealth – rich farming land, mines and factories. This strengthened the control of big business over the German economy. Some historians have even suggested that the inflation was deliberately engineered by wealthy industrialists with this aim in mind. The accusation is impossible to prove one way or the other, though the currency and the economy did recover remarkably quickly.

The economic situation improved dramatically in the years after 1924, largely thanks to *the Dawes Plan* of that year (so called after the American General Dawes, who chaired the

Table 13.1 **The collapse of the German mark, 1918–23**

	Date	*Marks required in exchange for £1*
November	1918	20
February	1922	1000
June	1922	1500
December	1922	50 000
February	1923	100 000
November	1923	21 000 000 000

conference), which provided an immediate loan from the USA equivalent to £40 million, relaxed the fixed reparations payments and in effect allowed the Germans to pay what they could afford. French troops withdrew from the Ruhr. The currency was stabilized, there was a boom in such industries as iron, steel, coal, chemicals and electricals, and wealthy landowners and industrialists were happy to tolerate the republic, since they were doing well out of it. Germany was even able to pay her reparations instalments under the Dawes Plan. During these relatively prosperous years, *Gustav Stresemann was the dominant political figure*. Although he was Chancellor only from August until November 1923, he remained as foreign minister until his death in October 1929, thus providing vital continuity and a steadying hand.

The work of the Dawes Plan was carried a stage further by *the Young Plan, drawn up in October 1929* by the Allied Reparations Commission, under the leadership of an American financier, Owen Young. This reduced the reparations total from £6600 million to £2000 million, to be paid in annual instalments over 59 years. There were other successes for the republic in foreign affairs, thanks to the work of Stresemann, and it seemed stable and well established. But behind this success, there remained some fatal weaknesses which were soon to bring disaster.

- The prosperity was much more dependent on the American loans than most people realized. If the USA were to find itself in financial difficulties so that it was forced to stop the loans, or worse still, demand that they be paid back quickly, the German economy would be shaken again. Unfortunately this is exactly what happened in 1929.
- Following the Wall Street Crash (October 1929), a world economic crisis developed. The USA stopped any further loans and began to call in many of the short-term loans already made to Germany. This caused a crisis of confidence in the currency and led to a run on the banks, many of which had to close. The industrial boom had led to worldwide over-production, and German exports, along with those of other countries, were severely reduced. Factories had to close, and by the middle of 1931unemployment was approaching 4 million. Sadly for Germany, Stresemann, the politician best equipped to deal with the crisis, died of a heart attack in October 1929 at the early age of 51.
- The government of Chancellor Brüning (Catholic Centre Party) reduced social services, unemployment benefit and the salaries and pensions of government officials, and stopped reparations payments. High tariffs were introduced to keep out foreign foodstuffs and thus help German farmers, while the government bought shares in factories hit by the slump. However, these measures did not produce quick results, though they did help after a time; unemployment continued to rise and by the spring of 1932 it stood at over 6 million. The government came under criticism from almost all groups in society, especially industrialists and the working class, who demanded more decisive action. The loss of much working-class support because of increasing unemployment and the reduction in unemployment benefit was a serious blow to the republic. By the end of 1932, the Weimar Republic had thus been brought to the verge of collapse. Even so, it might still have survived if there had been no other alternative.

(d) The alternative – Hitler and the Nazis

Hitler and the Nazi Party offered what seemed to be an attractive alternative just when the republic was at its most ineffective. The fortunes of the Nazi Party were linked closely to the economic situation: the more unstable the economy, the more seats the Nazis won in the *Reichstag*, as Table 13.2 shows. In the election of July 1932, with unemployment standing at over 6 million, the Nazis became the largest single party, winning 230 seats out of 608.

Table 13.2 **Nazi electoral success and the state of the economy, 1924–32**

Date		*Seats*	*State of economy*
March	1924	32	Still unstable after 1923 inflation
December	1924	14	Recovering after Dawes Plan
	1928	12	Prosperity and stability
	1930	107	Unemployment mounting – Nazis second largest party
July	1932	230	Massive unemployment – Nazis largest single party
November	1932	196	First signs of economic recovery

There is no doubt that the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, fostered by the economic crisis, was one of the most important causes of the downfall of the republic.

(e) What made the Nazis so popular?

- *They offered national unity*, *prosperity and full employment* by ridding Germany of what they claimed were the real causes of the troubles – Marxists, the 'November criminals' (the people who had agreed to the armistice in November 1918 and later the Versailles Treaty), Jesuits, Freemasons and Jews. Increasingly the Nazis sought to lay the blame for Germany's defeat in the First World War and all her subsequent problems on the Jews. Great play was made in Nazi propaganda with the 'stab in the back' myth – the idea that the German armies could have fought on but were betrayed by the traitors who had surrendered unnecessarily.
- *They promised to overthrow the Versailles settlement*, which was so unpopular with most Germans, and to build Germany into a great power again. This would include bringing all Germans (in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland) into the *Reich*.
- *The Nazi private army*, *the SA* (Sturmabteilung – *Storm Troopers), was attractive* to young people out of work; it gave them a small wage and a uniform.
- Wealthy landowners and industrialists encouraged the Nazis because *they feared a communist revolution* and they approved of the Nazi policy of hostility to communists. There is some controversy among historians about how far this support went. Some German Marxist historians claim that from the early 1920s the Nazis were financed by industrialists as an anti-communist force, that Hitler was, in effect, 'a tool of the capitalists'. But historian Joachim Fest believes that the amounts of money involved have been greatly exaggerated, and that though some industrialists were secretly in favour of Hitler becoming Chancellor, it was only *after* he came to power that funds began to flow into the party coffers from big business.
- *Hitler himself had extraordinary political abilities*. He possessed tremendous energy and willpower and a remarkable gift for public speaking, which enabled him to put forward his ideas with great emotional force. He used the latest modern communication techniques – mass rallies, parades, radio and film; he travelled all over Germany by air. Many Germans began to look towards him as some sort of Messiah (saviour) figure. A full version of his views and aims was set out in his book *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*, which he wrote in prison after the Beer-Hall *Putsch*.
- *The striking contrast between the governments of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi Party impressed people*. The former were respectable, dull and unable to maintain

law and order; the latter promised strong, decisive government and the restoration of national pride – an irresistible combination.
- *Without the economic crisis, however, it is doubtful whether Hitler would have had much chance of attaining power*. It was the widespread unemployment and social misery, together with the fear of communism and socialism, that gained the Nazis mass support, not only among the working class (recent research suggests that between 1928 and 1932 the Nazis attracted over 2 million voters away from the socialist SPD), but also among the lower middle classes – office-workers, shopkeepers, civil servants, teachers and small-scale farmers.

In July 1932, then, the Nazis were the largest single party, but Hitler failed to become Chancellor, partly because the Nazis still lacked an overall majority (they had 230 seats out of 608 in the Reichstag), and because he was not yet quite 'respectable' – the conservative President Hindenburg viewed him as an upstart and refused to have him as Chancellor. Given these circumstances, *was it inevitable that Hitler would come to power?* This is still a matter for disagreement among historians. Some feel that by the autumn of 1932 nothing could have saved the Weimar Republic, and that consequently nothing could have kept Hitler out. Others believe that the first signs of economic improvement could be seen, and that it should have been possible to block Hitler's progress. In fact Brüning's policies seem to have started to pay off, though he himself had been replaced as Chancellor by Franz von Papen (Conservative/Nationalist) in May 1932. This theory seems to be supported by the election results of November 1932, when the Nazis lost 34 seats and about 2 million votes, which was a serious setback for them. It seemed that perhaps the republic was weathering the storm and the Nazi challenge would fade out. However, at this point a further influence came into play, which killed off the republic by letting Hitler into power legally.

(f) Hitler becomes Chancellor (January 1933)

In the end it was political intrigue that brought Hitler to power. A small clique of right-wing politicians with support from the *Reichswehr* decided to bring Hitler into a coalition government with the Nationalists. The main conspirators were Franz von Papen and General Kurt von Schleicher. Their reasons for this momentous decision were:

- They were afraid of the Nazis attempting to seize power by a *Putsch*.
- They believed they could control Hitler better *inside* the government than if he remained outside it, and that a taste of power would make the Nazis modify their extremism.
- The Nationalists had only 37 seats in the *Reichstag* following the elections of July 1932. An alliance with the Nazis, who had 230 seats, would go a long way towards giving them a majority. The Nationalists did not believe in genuine democracy: they hoped that, with Nazi co-operation, they would be able to restore the monarchy and return to the system that had existed under Bismarck (Chancellor 1870–90), in which the Reichstag had much less power. Though this would destroy the Weimar Republic, these right-wing politicians were prepared to go ahead because it would give them a better chance of controlling the communists, who had just had their best result so far in the July election, winning 89 seats.

There was some complicated manoeuvring involving Papen, Schleicher and a group of wealthy businessmen; President Hindenburg was persuaded to dismiss Brüning and appoint Papen as Chancellor. They hoped to bring Hitler in as Vice-Chancellor, but he

would settle for nothing less than being Chancellor himself. In January 1933 therefore, they persuaded Hindenburg to invite Hitler to become Chancellor with Papen as Vice-Chancellor, even though the Nazis had by then lost ground in the elections of November 1932. Papen still believed Hitler could be controlled, and remarked to a friend: 'In two months we'll have pushed Hitler into a corner so hard that he'll be squeaking.'

Hitler was able to come to power legally therefore, because all the other parties, including the *Reichswehr*, were so preoccupied with the threat from the communists that they did not sufficiently recognize the danger from the Nazis, and so failed to unite in opposition to them. It ought to have been possible to keep the Nazis out – they were losing ground and had nowhere near an overall majority. But instead of uniting with the other parties to exclude them, the Nationalists made the fatal mistake of *inviting* Hitler into power.

1 Could the Weimar Republic have survived?

Although there were signs of economic improvement by the end of 1932, it was perhaps inevitable, at that point, that the Weimar Republic would collapse, since the powerful conservative groups and the army were prepared to abandon it, and replace it with a conservative, nationalist and anti-democratic state similar to the one that had existed before 1914. In fact it is possible to argue that the Weimar Republic had already ceased to exist in May 1932 when Hindenburg appointed Papen as Chancellor with responsibility to him, not to the *Reichstag*.

2 Was it inevitable that Hitler and the Nazis would come to power?

The majority view is that this need not have happened; Papen, Schleicher, Hindenburg and the others must take the blame for being prepared to invite him into power, and then failing to control him. According to Ian Kershaw, Hitler's most recent biographer:

> There was no inevitability about Hitler's accession to power … a Hitler Chancellorship might have been avoided. With the corner turning of the economic Depression, and with the Nazi movement facing potential break-up if power were not soon attained, the future – even under an authoritarian government – would have been very different. … In fact, political miscalculation by those with regular access to the corridors of power rather than any action on the part of the Nazi leader played a larger role in placing him in the Chancellor's seat. … The anxiety to destroy democracy rather than the keenness to bring the Nazis to power was what triggered the complex development that led to Hitler's Chancellorship.

However, there were some people in Germany, even on the right, who had misgivings about Hitler's appointment. Kershaw tells us that General Ludendorff, who had supported Hitler at the time of the 1923 Munich *Putsch*, now wrote to Hindenburg: 'You have delivered up our holy German Fatherland to one of the greatest demagogues of all time. I solemnly prophesy that this accursed man will cast our Reich into the abyss and bring our nation to inconceivable misery. Future generations will damn you in your grave for what you have done.'

13.2 WHAT DID NATIONAL SOCIALISM STAND FOR?

What it did *not* mean was nationalization and the redistribution of wealth. The word 'socialism' was included only to attract the support of the German workers, though it has

to be admitted that Hitler did promise a better deal for workers. In fact it bore many similarities to Mussolini's fascism. *The movement's general principles were:*

- It was more than just one political party among many. *It was a way of life dedicated to the rebirth of the nation*. All classes in society must be united into a 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*) to make Germany a great nation again and restore national pride. Since the Nazis had the only correct way to achieve this, it followed that all other parties, especially communists, must be eliminated.
- Great emphasis was laid *on the ruthlessly efficient organization of all aspects of the lives of the masses* under the central government, in order to achieve greatness, with violence and terror if necessary. The state was supreme; the interests of the individual always came second to the interests of the state, that is, *a totalitarian state* in which propaganda had a vital role to play.
- Since it was likely that greatness could only be achieved by war, *the entire state must be organized on a military footing*.
- *The race theory was vitally important* – mankind could be divided into two groups, Aryans and non-Aryans. The Aryans were the Germans, ideally tall, blond, blue-eyed and handsome; they were the master race, destined to rule the world. All the rest, such as Slavs, coloured peoples and particularly Jews, were inferior. They were to be excluded from the 'national community', along with other groups who were considered unfit to belong, including gypsies and homosexuals. The Slavs were destined to become the slave race of the Germans.

All the various facets and details of the Nazi system sprang from these four basic concepts. There has been great debate among historians about whether National Socialism was *a natural development of German history*, *or whether it was a one-off*, *a distortion of normal development*. Many British and American historians argued that it was a natural extension of earlier Prussian militarism and German traditions. Historian Shelley Baranowski goes along with this interpretation (in *Nazi Empire*, 2010). She points out that before the First World War Germany's African colonies, including Tanganyika, Namibia, Cameroon and Togo, were difficult to control, and that Prussian military doctrine held that the complete destruction of all enemy forces must be the prime objective of any war. In the case of rebellious colonies, this became mixed in with racist elements, producing a genocidal mentality. In Tanganyika, following unrest and uprisings, almost half a million Africans were killed, some by deliberate starvation. An uprising in Namibia was dealt with in the same way. Similar trends were apparent during the First World War, after the defeat of the Russians. In March 1918 Germany gained control of former Russian territories containing a large proportion of Russia's coal, iron-ore and oil resources. In the few months before Germany's own surrender, German troops suppressed all nationalist movements in these territories with great brutality, treating the Slav inhabitants as second-class citizens. Baranowski suggests that Nazi brutality in eastern Europe doing the Second World War was a revival and continuation of the Germans' pre-First-World-War attitudes, as was the creation of the concentration camps in 1933 for opponents of the Nazis. However, she does stop short of arguing that the Germans in general had developed a genocidal mentality that led directly to the Holocaust. As she puts it: 'The deliberate scouring of a whole continent, and potentially the entire surface of the globe for Jews to be carried off to assembly-line extermination in gas chambers or killing pits had no precedent.'

Marxist historians believed that National Socialism and fascism in general were the final stage and culmination of western capitalism, which was bound to collapse because of its fatal flaws. British historian R. Butler, writing in 1942, believed that 'National Socialism is the inevitable reappearance of Prussian militarism and terror, as seen during

the eighteenth century.' Sir Lewis Namier, a Polish Jew who settled in Britain and became an eminent historian, was understandably bitter:

> Attempts to absolve the German people of responsibility are unconvincing. And as for Hitler and his Third Reich, these arose from the people, indeed from the lower depths of the people. … Friends of the Germans must ask themselves why individual Germans become useful, decent citizens, but in groups, both at home and abroad, are apt to develop tendencies that make them a menace to their fellow-men?
>
> (*Avenues of History*)

On the other hand, German historians like Gerhard Ritter and K. D. Bracher stressed the personal contribution of Hitler, arguing that Hitler was striving to break away from the past and introduce something completely new. National Socialism was therefore a grotesque departure from the normal and logical historical development. This is probably the majority view and it is one that found favour in Germany, since it meant that the German people, contrary to what Namier claimed, *can* be absolved from most of the blame.

Ian Kershaw recognizes that there are elements of both interpretations in Hitler's career. He points out that

> the mentalities which conditioned the behaviour both of the elites and the masses, and which made Hitler's rise possible, were products of strands of German political culture that were plainly recognizable in the twenty years or so before the First World War. … Most of the elements of political culture that fed into Nazism were peculiarly German.

However, Kershaw is also clear that Hitler was not the logical, inevitable product of long-term trends in German culture and beliefs. Nor was he a mere accident in German history: 'without the unique conditions in which he came to prominence, Hitler would have been nothing. … He exploited the conditions brilliantly.'

13.3 HITLER CONSOLIDATES HIS POWER

Hitler was an Austrian, the son of a customs official in Braunau-am-Inn on the German border. He had hoped to become an artist but failed to gain admittance to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, and afterwards spent six down-and-out years living in Vienna dosshouses and developing his hatred of Jews. In Munich, Hitler had joined Anton Drexler's tiny German Workers' Party (1919), which he soon took over and transformed into the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). Now, in January 1933, he was Chancellor of a coalition government of National Socialists and nationalists, but he was not yet satisfied with the amount of power he possessed: Nazis held only three out of eleven cabinet posts. He therefore insisted on a general election in the hope of winning an overall majority for the Nazis.

(a) The election of 5 March 1933

The election campaign was an extremely violent one. Since they were now in government, the Nazis were able to use all the apparatus of state, including the press and radio, to try and whip up a majority. They had a great advantage in that Hermann Goering, one of the leading Nazis, had been appointed minister of the interior for Prussia, the largest and most important German state. This meant that he controlled the police. He replaced senior police officers

with reliable Nazis, and 50 000 auxiliary policemen were called up, most of them from the SA and the SS (*Schutzstaffeln* – Hitler's second private army, formed originally to be his personal bodyguard). They had orders to avoid hostility towards the SA and SS but to show no mercy to communists and other 'enemies of the state'. They were given permission to use firearms if necessary. Meetings of Nazis and nationalists were allowed to go ahead without interference, but communist and socialist political meetings were wrecked and speakers were beaten up, while police looked the other way. The nationalists went along with all this because they were determined to use the Nazis to destroy communism once and for all.

(b) The Reichstag fire

The climax of the election campaign came on the night of 27 February when the Reichstag was badly damaged by a fire, apparently started by a young Dutch anarchist called Marinus van der Lubbe, who was arrested, tried and executed for his pains. It has been suggested that the SA knew about van der Lubbe's plans, but allowed him to go ahead and even started fires of their own elsewhere in the building with the intention of blaming it on the communists. There is no conclusive evidence of this, but what is certain is that the fire played right into Hitler's hands: *he was able to use the fire to stir up fear of communism and as a pretext for the banning of the party*. Some four thousand communists were arrested and imprisoned. However, in spite of all their efforts, the Nazis still failed to win an overall majority in the 5 March election. With almost 90 per cent of the electorate voting, the Nazis won 288 out of the 647 seats, 36 short of the magic figure – 324 – needed for an overall majority. The nationalists again won 52 seats. Hitler was still dependent on the support of Papen and Hugenberg (leader of the nationalists). This turned out to be the Nazis' best performance in a 'free' election, and they never won an overall majority. It is worth remembering that even at the height of their electoral triumph the Nazis were supported by only 44 per cent of the voting electorate.

13.4 HOW WAS HITLER ABLE TO STAY IN POWER?

(a) The Enabling Law, 23 March 1933

Hitler was not satisfied with the election result. He was determined that he must be dependent on nobody except his Nazi party. While President Hindenburg was still in shock after the Reichstag fire, Hitler apparently persuaded him that emergency legislation was vital to prevent a communist uprising. Known as the Enabling Law, this legislation was forced through the Reichstag on 23 March 1933, and it was this that provided the legal basis of Hitler's power. It stated that the government could introduce laws without the approval of the Reichstag for the next four years, could ignore the constitution and could sign agreements with foreign countries. All laws would be drafted by the Chancellor and come into operation the day they were published. This meant that Hitler was to be the complete dictator for the next four years, but since his will was now law, he would be able to extend the four-year period indefinitely. He no longer needed the support of Papen and Hugenberg; the Weimar constitution had been abandoned. Such a major constitutional change needed approval by a two-thirds majority, yet the Nazis hadn't even a simple majority.

How did the Nazis get the Enabling Bill through the Reichstag?
The method was typical of the Nazis. Since the election, the whole country had experienced a wave of unprecedented Nazi violence directed at political opponents and at Jews.

Jewish synagogues were attacked and trashed by Hitler's brownshirts (SA), and there were countless beatings and murders. Hundreds more were arrested and sent to newly set-up concentration camps. On 23 March, the day of the Enabling Law vote, The Kroll Opera House (where the Reichstag had been meeting since the fire) was surrounded by Hitler's private armies. MPs had to push their way through solid ranks of SS troops to get into the building. The 81 communist MPs had either been arrested or were in hiding. Some of the socialists were simply not allowed to pass. Inside the building, rows of brown-shirted SA troops lined the walls, and the SS could be heard chanting outside: 'We want the Bill, or fire and murder.' It took courage to vote against the Enabling Bill in such surroundings. When the Catholic Centre Party decided to vote in favour of the Bill, the result was a foregone conclusion. Only the Social Democrats spoke against it, and it passed by 441 votes to 94 (all Social Democrats). The Nazi aim of killing off parliamentary democracy had been achieved, and by means that could in no way be called 'legal'. The Papen/Schleicher/Hindenburg plan to control Hitler had failed completely, and Ludendorff's prophecy was beginning to become reality.

(b) Gleichschaltung

Having effectively muzzled the *Reichstag,* Hitler immediately set about sidelining the Chancellery and the ministries. This was achieved by a policy known as *Gleichschaltung* (forcible co-ordination), which turned Germany into a totalitarian or fascist state. The government tried to control as many aspects of life as possible, using a huge police force and the notorious State Secret Police, the *Gestapo* (*Geheime Staatspolizei*). It became dangerous to oppose or criticize the government in any way. *The main features of the Nazi totalitarian state were*:

- All political parties except the National Socialists were banned, so that Germany became *a one-party state* like Italy and the USSR. The Catholic Centre Party actually dissolved itself a week before the official ban was introduced!
- The separate state parliaments (*Länder*) still existed but lost all power. Most of their functions were taken over by *a Nazi Special Commissioner*, appointed in each state by the Berlin government, who had complete power over all officials and affairs within his state. There were no more state, provincial or municipal elections.
- *The civil service was purged*: all Jews and other suspected 'enemies of the state' were removed, so that it became fully reliable.
- *Trade unions*, *a likely source of resistance*, *were abolished*, their funds confiscated and their leaders arrested. They were replaced by *the German Labour Front*, to which all workers had to belong. The government dealt with all grievances, and strikes were not allowed.
- *The education system was closely controlled* so that children could be indoctrinated with Nazi opinions. School textbooks were often rewritten to fit in with Nazi theory, the most obvious examples being in history and biology. History was distorted to fit in with Hitler's view that great things could only be achieved by force. Human biology was dominated by the Nazi race theory. Teachers, lecturers and professors were closely watched to make sure they did not express opinions which strayed from the party line, and many lived in fear in case they were reported to the Gestapo by children of convinced Nazis.
- The system was supplemented by *the Hitler Youth*, which all boys had to join at 14; girls joined *the League of German Maidens*. The regime was deliberately trying to destroy traditional bonds such as loyalty to the family: children were taught that their first duty was to obey Hitler, who took on the title *Führer* (leader, or guide). The

favourite slogan was 'the Führer is always right'. Children were even encouraged to betray their parents to the *Gestapo*, and many did so. These youth organizations worked on the assumption that the Nazi regime would remain in power for many generations; there was much talk of 'the thousand-year Reich'. This is why the present generation of young people had to be thoroughly indoctrinated to provide a firm foundation for the regime. The vital element was: they must become steeped in militaristic values. In a speech in Nuremberg in September 1935, Hitler told the crowd:

> What we look for from our German youth is different from what people wanted in the past. In our eyes, the German youth of the future must be slim and slender, swift as the greyhound, tough as leather, and hard as Krupp steel. We must educate a new type of man so that our people are not ruined by the symptoms of degeneracy of our day.

- *There was a special policy concerned with the family*. The Nazis were worried that the birth rate was declining, and therefore 'racially pure' and healthy families were encouraged to have more children. Family planning centres were closed down and contraceptives banned. Mothers who responded well were awarded medals – the Cross of Honour of the German Mother; a mother of eight children gained a gold medal, six children a silver medal, and four children a bronze medal. On the other hand, people who were considered 'undesirable' were discouraged from having children. These included Jews, gypsies, and people deemed to be physically or mentally unfit. In 1935, marriages between Aryans and Jews were forbidden; over 300 000 people who were designated as 'unfit' were forcibly sterilized to prevent them having children.
- *All communications and the media were controlled by the minister of propaganda, Dr Joseph Goebbels*. Leni Riefenstahl, a brilliant young film director, was invited personally by Hitler to work for the Nazis; she made an impressive film of the 1934 Nuremberg party rally. Using 30 cameras and a crew of 120, she produced a documentary the like of which had never been seen before. When it was released in March 1935 under the title *Triumph of the Will*, it was widely acclaimed; it even won a gold medal at the Venice Film Festival in 1935. But it was more than an ordinary documentary. In the words of Richard J. Evans, the 'will' in question was

  > not only that of the German people, but also and above all, the will of Hitler, whom her cameras almost invariably portrayed standing alone. … In the final stages of the film the screen was filled with columns of marching stormtroopers, and black-shirted, steel-helmeted SS men, leaving audiences no room for doubt. It was a propaganda film designed to convince Germany and the world of the power, strength and determination of the German people under Hitler's leadership.

No further films were made about Hitler himself – *Triumph of the Will* had said it all. However, the state gradually increased its control over the cinema so that only feature films approved by the regime could be shown.

Radio, newspapers, magazines, books, theatre, music and art were all supervised. The government made cheap radios available so that by 1939 over 70 per cent of German households owned a 'wireless' set. But as John Traynor puts it: 'While people may have appreciated the material benefit this represented, we cannot know for certain what they came to think of the relentless message that poured constantly from their radio set.' A national book-burning day was held on 10 May 1933 when thousands of books by Jewish, socialist and other 'suspect' writers were publicly

burned on huge bonfires in Germany's university cities. By the end of 1934 about 4000 books were on the forbidden list because they were 'un-German'. It was impossible to perform the plays of Bertolt Brecht (a communist) or the music of Felix Mendelssohn and Gustav Mahler (they were Jewish). American jazz was popular with young people, but Hitler hated it and tried to exclude it from Germany. But it was so widespread in nightclubs and dance halls that it proved impossible to eliminate it completely.

Hitler had a special interest in art, having once tried to make a career as an artist. He was soon announcing that it was time for a new type of art – German art. The idea that art was international must be rejected out of hand because it was decadent and Jewish. A wide variety of artists was condemned and their works removed from galleries. They included Jewish, abstract, left-wing, modernist and all foreign artists, whatever their style. Hitler even condemned the French impressionists simply because they were not German. On 20 March 1939 about 5000 condemned paintings and drawings were burnt on a massive bonfire outside the central fire station in Berlin. Artists, writers and scholars were continually harassed until it became pointless to produce any artwork that did not win the approval of the regime, and it was impossible to express any opinion which did not fit in with the Nazi system. By these methods public opinion could be moulded and mass support assured, or so the Nazis hoped.

- *The economic life of the country was closely organized*. Although the Nazis (unlike the communists) had no special ideas about the economy, they did have some basic aims: *to eliminate unemployment and to make Germany self-sufficient by boosting exports and reducing imports*, *a policy known as 'autarky'*. The idea was to put the economy onto a war footing, so that all the materials necessary for waging war could be produced, as far as possible, in Germany itself. This would ensure that Germany would never again be hamstrung by a trade blockade like the one imposed by the Allies during the First World War. The centrepiece of the policy was the Four-Year Plan introduced in 1936 under the direction of Hermann Goering, the head of the *Luftwaffe* (the German air force). Policies included:

  - telling industrialists what to produce, depending on what the country needed at that moment; and closing factories down if their products were not required;
  - moving workers around the country to places where jobs existed and labour was needed;
  - encouraging farmers to increase agricultural yields;
  - controlling food prices and rents;
  - manipulating foreign exchange rates to avoid inflation;
  - introducing vast schemes of public works – slum clearance, land drainage and autobahn (motorway) building;
  - forcing foreign countries to buy German goods, either by refusing to pay cash for goods bought from those countries, so that they had to accept German goods instead (often armaments), or by refusing permission to foreigners with bank accounts in Germany to withdraw their cash, so that they had to spend it in Germany on German goods;
  - manufacturing synthetic rubber and wool and experimenting to produce petrol from coal in order to reduce dependence on foreign countries;
  - increasing expenditure on armaments; in 1938–9 the military budget accounted for 52 per cent of government spending. This was an incredible amount for 'peacetime'. As Richard Overy puts it: 'this stemmed from Hitler's desire to turn Germany into an economic and military superpower before the rest of the world caught up'.

- *Religion was brought under state control*, since the churches were a possible source of opposition. At first Hitler moved cautiously with both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

    - **The Roman Catholic Church**
      In 1933 Hitler signed an agreement (known as the *Concordat*) with the pope, in which he promised not to interfere with German Catholics in any way; in return they agreed to dissolve the Catholic Centre Party and take no further part in politics. But relations soon became strained when the government broke the Concordat by dissolving the Catholic Youth League because it rivalled the Hitler Youth. When the Catholics protested, their schools were closed down. By 1937 Catholics were completely disillusioned with the Nazis, and Pope Pius XI issued an Encyclical (a letter to be read out in all Roman Catholic churches in Germany) in which he condemned the Nazi movement for being 'hostile to Christ and his Church'. Hitler was unimpressed, however, and thousands of priests and nuns were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

    - **The Protestant Churches**
      Since a majority of Germans belonged to one or other of the various Protestant groups, Hitler tried to organize them into a '*Reich* Church' with a Nazi as the first *Reich* bishop. But many pastors (priests) objected and a group of them, led by Martin Niemoller, protested to Hitler about government interference and about his treatment of the Jews. Once again the Nazis were completely ruthless – Niemoller and over 800 other pastors were sent to concentration camps (Niemoller himself managed to survive for eight years until he was liberated in 1945). Hundreds more were arrested later and the rest were forced to swear an oath of obedience to the Führer.

      Eventually the persecutions appeared to bring the churches under control, but resistance continued, and the churches were the only organizations to keep up a quiet protest campaign against the Nazi system. For example, in 1941 some Catholic bishops protested against the Nazi policy of killing mentally handicapped and mentally ill people in German asylums. Over 70 000 people were murdered in this 'euthanasia' campaign. Hitler publicly ordered the mass killings to be stopped, but evidence suggests that they still continued.

- *Above all*, *Germany was a police state*. The police, helped by the SS and the Gestapo, tried to prevent all open opposition to the regime. The law courts were not impartial: 'enemies of the state' rarely received a fair trial, and *the concentration camps* introduced by Hitler in 1933 were full. The main ones before 1939 were Dachau near Munich, Buchenwald near Weimar and Sachsenhausen near Berlin. They contained 'political' prisoners – communists, Social Democrats, Catholic priests, Protestant pastors. Other persecuted groups were homosexuals and above all, Jews; perhaps as many as 15 000 homosexual men were sent to the camps, where they were made to wear pink triangle badges.

  However, recent research in Germany has shown that the police state was not as efficient as used to be thought. The Gestapo was understaffed; for example, there were only 43 officials to police Essen, a city with a population of 650 000. They had to rely heavily on ordinary people coming forward with information to denounce others. After 1943, as people became more disillusioned with the war, they were less willing to help the authorities, and the Gestapo's job became more difficult.

- *The worst aspect of the Nazi system was Hitler's anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) policy*. There were only just over half a million Jews in Germany, less than 1 per cent of the total population, but Hitler decided to use them as scapegoats for everything – the humiliation at Versailles, the depression, unemployment and communism. He began by talking in terms of racial purity – the Aryan race, especially the Germans, must be kept free from contamination by the non-Aryan Jews. This is why they must be cleared out of Germany. In 1925 he wrote in his book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) about the time in Vienna when he was converted to anti-Semitism. He saw:

> a phenomenon in a black caftan and wearing black sidelocks. … The longer I gazed at this strange countenance, the more the question shaped itself in my brain: is this a German? … As soon as I began to investigate the matter, Vienna appeared to me in a new light: was there any shady undertaking, any form of foulness, especially in cultural life, in which at least one Jew did not participate? In putting the probing knife to that kind of abscess one immediately discovered, like a maggot in a putrescent body, a little Jew who was often blinded by the sudden light.

Ian Kershaw suggests that this was probably a dramatization, since he was known to have been reading anti-Semitic newspapers before he went to live in Vienna. In fact the Jewish community played an important role in the cultural, scientific and business life of Germany, but Hitler would allow them no credit for that. In many speeches before he became Chancellor he spoke about them in the most extreme language. As soon as he became Chancellor, his supporters took it as a licence to begin persecuting the Jews. However, when the government declared a boycott of Jewish shops for 1 April 1933, the expected mass support was not forthcoming. The general public seemed apathetic, and some people even showed sympathy for the Jewish shops. Hitler decided that restraint was called for; clearly people's main concerns were elsewhere. Consequently further boycotts were cancelled and the focus moved to attempts to strengthen the economy.

By 1935 Hitler's attitude had hardened again and he claimed that there was a world Jewish/communist plot to take control. He seemed to assume that communism was a Jewish movement, probably because many of the leading Russian Bolsheviks were Jewish. This, Hitler believed, would plunge the world into a new Dark Age, unless the Germans were able to thwart the plot. Lots of Germans were in such a desperate situation that they were prepared to accept the propaganda about the Jews and were not sorry to see thousands of them removed from their jobs as lawyers, doctors, teachers and journalists. Robert Gellately (in *Backing Hitler,* 2001) shows that many ordinary Germans actively participated in the atrocities against the Jews, helped themselves to stolen Jewish property and happily took jobs vacated by Jews. Gotz Aly also asked the question: 'What drove ordinary Germans to tolerate and commit historically unprecedented crimes against humanity?' His answer is that ordinary Germans co-operated in genocide because they benefited from it in material terms. The anti-Jewish campaign inside Germany was given legal status by *the Nuremberg Laws* (1935), which deprived Jews of their German citizenship, forbade them to marry non-Jews (to preserve the purity of the Aryan race), and ruled that even a person with only one Jewish grandparent must be classed as a Jew.

Until 1938 Hitler still proceeded relatively cautiously with the anti-Jewish policy, probably because he was concerned about unfavourable foreign reaction. Later the campaign became more extreme. In November 1938, he authorized what became known as *Kristallnacht* (the 'Night of Broken Glass'), a vicious attack on Jewish synagogues and other property throughout the whole country. When the Second World War began, the plight of the Jews deteriorated rapidly. They were harassed in every possible way;

their property was attacked and burnt, shops looted, synagogues destroyed, and Jews themselves herded into concentration camps. Eventually the terrible nature of what Hitler called his 'Final Solution' of the Jewish problem became clear: *he intended to exterminate the entire Jewish race*. During the war, as the Germans occupied such countries as Czechoslovakia, Poland and western Russia, he was able to lay his hands on non-German Jews as well. It is believed that by 1945, out of a total of 9 million Jews living in Europe at the outbreak of the Second World War, about 5.7 million had been murdered, most of them in the gas chambers of the Nazi extermination camps. The *Holocaust*, as it became known, was the worst and most shocking of the many crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi regime.

(c) Hitler's policies were popular with many sections of the German people

It would be wrong to give the impression that Hitler hung on to power simply by terrorizing the entire nation. True, if you were a Jew, a communist or a socialist, or if you persisted in protesting and criticizing the Nazis, you would run into trouble; but many people who had no great interest in politics could usually live quite happily under the Nazis. This was because Hitler took care to please many important groups in society. Even as late as 1943, when the fortunes of war had turned against Germany, Hitler somehow retained his popularity with ordinary people. Gotz Aly (in *Hitler's Beneficiaries,* 2007) argues that the Nazis were as much socialist as they were nationalist, and that they genuinely tried to make life better for ordinary Germans. Hitler told a reporter that his ambition was to raise the general standard of living and make the German people rich.

- His arrival in power in January 1933 caused a great wave of enthusiasm and anticipation after the weak and indecisive governments of the Weimar Republic. *Hitler seemed to be offering action and a great new Germany*. He was careful to foster this enthusiasm by military parades, torchlight processions and firework displays, the most famous of which were the huge rallies held every year in Nuremberg, which seemed to appeal to the masses.
- *Hitler was successful in eliminating unemployment*. This was probably the most important reason for his popularity with ordinary people. When he came to power the unemployment figure still stood at over 6 million, but by the end of 1935 it had dropped to just over 2 million, and by 1939 it was negligible. *How was this achieved?* The public works schemes provided thousands of extra jobs. A large party bureaucracy was set up now that the party was expanding so rapidly, and this provided thousands of extra office and administrative posts. There were purges of Jews and anti-Nazis from the civil service and from many other jobs connected with law, education, journalism, broadcasting, the theatre and music, leaving large numbers of vacancies. Conscription was reintroduced in 1935. Rearmament was started in 1934 and gradually speeded up. Thus Hitler had provided what the unemployed had been demanding in their marches in 1932: work and bread (*Arbeit und Brot*).
- *Care was taken to keep the support of the workers* once it had been gained by the provision of jobs. This was important because the abolition of trade unions still rankled with many of them. The Strength through Joy Organization (*Kraft durch Freude*) provided benefits such as subsidized holidays in Germany and abroad, cruises, skiing holidays, cheap theatre and concert tickets and convalescent homes. Gotz Aly looked at documents from the former East German archives which show in detail that the Nazis passed scores of laws extending and increasing social security provision, doubling workers' holiday entitlement, with pay, and making it more

difficult for landlords to increase rents and evict tenants. According to Aly, the Nazi dictatorship was built not on terror but on a mutual calculation of interest between leaders and people.

- *Wealthy industrialists and businessmen were delighted with the Nazis* in spite of the government's interference with their industries. This was partly because they now felt safe from a communist revolution, and because they were glad to be rid of trade unions, which had constantly pestered them with demands for shorter working hours and increased wages. In addition they were able to buy back at low prices the shares they had sold to the state during the crisis of 1929–32, and there was promise of great profits from the public works schemes, rearmament and other orders which the government placed with them.
- *Farmers*, *though doubtful about Hitler at first*, *gradually warmed towards the Nazis* as soon as it became clear that farmers were in a specially favoured position in the state because of the declared Nazi aim of self-sufficiency in food production. Prices of agricultural produce were fixed so that they were assured of a reasonable profit. Farms were declared to be hereditary estates, and on the death of the owner, had to be passed on to his next of kin. This meant that a farmer could not be forced to sell or mortgage his farm to pay off his debts, and was welcomed by many farmers who were heavily in debt as a result of the financial crisis.
- *Hitler gained the support of the Reichswehr (army)*, which was crucial if he was to feel secure in power. The *Reichswehr* was the one organization which could have removed him by force. Yet by the summer of 1934, Hitler had won it over:

    - Although some of the generals thought that Hitler was a contemptible upstart, on the whole the officer class was well-disposed towards him because of his much-publicized aim of setting aside the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty by rearmament and expansion of the army to its full strength.
    - There had been a steady infiltration of National Socialists into the lower ranks, and this was beginning to work through to the lower officer classes.
    - the army leaders were much impressed by Hitler's handling of the troublesome SA in the notorious *Rohm Purge* (also known as 'the Night of the Long Knives') of 30 June 1934.

The background to this was that the SA, under their leader Ernst Röhm, a personal friend of Hitler from the early days of the movement, was becoming an embarrassment to the new Chancellor. Röhm wanted his brownshirts to be merged with the *Reichswehr* and himself made a general. Hitler knew that the aristocratic *Reichswehr* generals would not hear of either; they considered the SA to be little more than a bunch of gangsters, while Röhm himself was known to be a homosexual (which was frowned on in army circles as well as officially among the Nazis) and had criticized the generals in public for their stiff-necked conservatism. There were also divisions within Nazi ranks: some leading Nazis, including Gregor Strasser and Röhm himself, repeatedly urged Hitler to be more radical and socialist in his policies. Again, this was something that would not be to the taste of the Nationalists and the army. Röhm had enemies in the party; Hermann Goering and Heinrich Himmler, who were both busy building up their own power bases, also felt that Röhm was getting too powerful. Himmler told Hitler that Röhm was planning to use his SA to seize power from Hitler. Apparently this caused Hitler to make up his mind – for all these reasons Röhm must be removed.

Hitler's solution to the problem was typical of Nazi methods – ruthless but efficient; he used one of his private armies to deal with the other. Rohm and most of the SA leaders were murdered by SS troops, and Hitler seized the opportunity to have a number of other enemies and critics murdered who had nothing to do with the SA. For example, two of

Papen's advisers were shot dead by the SS because ten days earlier Papen had made a speech at Marburg criticizing Hitler. Papen himself was probably saved only by the fact that he was a close friend of President Hindenburg. It is thought that at least 400 people were murdered during that one night or soon afterwards. Hitler justified his actions by claiming that they were all plotting against the state.

The German historian Lothar Machtan, in his book *The Hidden Hitler* (2000), suggested that Hitler was a homosexual who had a series of relationships with young men during his early days in Vienna and Munich, which Röhm and his friends knew all about. If Machtan is right, then another explanation for the purge was the need for Hitler to safeguard his reputation, as the rift between himself and Röhm widened. 'Hitler's principal motive for taking action against Röhm and associates was fear of exposure and blackmail. … The elimination of witnesses and evidence – *that* was the real purpose of this act of terrorism.'

Whatever Hitler's true motives, *the purge had important results*: the *Reichswehr* were relieved to be rid of the troublesome SA leaders and impressed by Hitler's decisive handling of the problem. When President Hindenburg died only a month later, the *Reichswehr* agreed that Hitler should become president as well as Chancellor (though he preferred to be known as the *Führer*). The *Reichswehr* took an oath of allegiance to the *Führer*.

- *Finally*, *Hitler's foreign policy was a brilliant success*. With each successive triumph, more and more Germans began to think of him as infallible.

13.5 NAZISM AND FASCISM

There is sometimes confusion about the meaning of the terms 'Nazism' and 'fascism'. Mussolini started the first fascist party, in Italy; later the term was used, not entirely accurately, to describe other right-wing movements and governments. In fact, each brand of so-called 'fascism' had its own special features; in the case of the German Nazis, there were many similarities with Mussolini's fascist system, but also some important differences.

(a) Similarities

- Both were intensely anti-communist and, because of this, drew a solid basis of support from all classes.
- They were anti-democratic and attempted to organize a totalitarian state, controlling industry, agriculture and the way of life of the people, so that personal freedom was limited.
- They attempted to make the country self-sufficient.
- They emphasized the close unity of all classes working together to achieve these ends.
- Both emphasized the supremacy of the state, were intensely nationalistic, glorifying war, and the cult of the hero/leader who would guide the rebirth of the nation from its troubles.

(b) Differences

- Fascism never seemed to take root in Italy as deeply as the Nazi system did in Germany.
- The Italian system was not as efficient as that in Germany. The Italians never came anywhere near achieving self-sufficiency and never eliminated unemployment;

in fact unemployment rose. The Nazis succeeded in eliminating unemployment, though they never achieved complete autarky.
- The Italian system was not as ruthless or as brutal as that in Germany and there were no mass atrocities, though there were unpleasant incidents like the murders of Matteotti and Amendola.
- Italian fascism was not particularly anti-Jewish or racist until 1938, when Mussolini adopted the policy to emulate Hitler.
- Mussolini was more successful than Hitler with his religious policy after his agreement with the pope in 1929.
- Finally, their constitutional positions were different: the monarchy still remained in Italy, and though Mussolini normally ignored Victor Emmanuel, the king played a vital role in 1943 when Mussolini's critics turned to him as head of state. He was able to announce Mussolini's dismissal and order his arrest. Unfortunately, there was nobody in Germany who could dismiss Hitler.

13.6 HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS HITLER IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS?

There are conflicting views about this. Some argue that Hitler's regime brought many benefits to the majority of the German people. Others believe that his whole career was a complete disaster and that his so-called successes were a myth created by Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda. Taking the argument a step further, some German historians claim that Hitler was a weak ruler who never actually initiated any policy of his own.

(a) Successful?

One school of thought claims that the Nazis were successful up to 1939 because they provided many benefits of the sort mentioned above in Section 13.4(c), and developed a flourishing economy. Hence Hitler's great popularity with the masses, which endured well on into the 1940s, in spite of the hardships of the war. If only Hitler had succeeded in keeping Germany out of war, so the theory goes, all would have been well, and his Third Reich might have lasted a 1000 years (as he boasted it would).

(b) Only superficially successful?

The opposing view is that Hitler's supposed successes were superficial and could not stand the test of time. The so-called 'economic miracle' was an illusion; there was a huge budget deficit and the country was, technically, bankrupt. Even the superficial success was achieved by methods unacceptable in a modern civilized society:

- Full employment was achieved only at the cost of a brutal anti-Jewish campaign and a massive rearmament programme.
- Self-sufficiency was not possible unless Germany was able to take over and exploit large areas of eastern Europe belonging to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia.
- Permanent success therefore depended on success in war; thus there was no possibility of Hitler keeping out of war.
- Nor was there much evidence of any improvement in the standard of living of ordinary people, which Hitler claimed was one of his main aims. As Richard J. Evans points out: 'Most statistical investigations are agreed that the economic situation of the majority of middle-class wage-earners did not markedly improve between

1933 and 1939.' As concentration on rearmament increased, there were shortages of food and other important goods; in fact the per capita consumption of many basic foodstuffs declined in the mid-1930s. Any wage increases came about only through working longer hours.

The conclusion must therefore be, as Alan Bullock wrote in his biography of Hitler, that

> Recognition of the benefits which Hitler's rule brought to Germany needs to be tempered by the realization that for the Fuhrer – and for a considerable section of the German people – these were by-products of his true purpose, the creation of an instrument of power with which to realize a policy of expansion that in the end was to admit no limits.

Even the policy of preparedness for war failed; Hitler's plans were designed to be completed during the early 1940s, probably around 1942. In 1939 Germany's economy was not ready for a major war, although it was strong enough to defeat Poland and France. However, as Richard Overy points out, 'the large programmes of war production were not yet complete, some barely started. … The German economy was caught in 1939 midway through the transformation anticipated … as Hitler ruefully reflected some years later, militarization had been "mismanaged".' Adam Tooze argues that Hitler resisted pressure from his advisers to prepare for a long war because he believed that Germany had no chance of winning a long war. In fact, in the first year of the war most of the increased military expenditure went on the production of aircraft, artillery and ammunition for the war in the West, which was expected to be fairly short. Only then would preparations be made for the attack on Russia.

(c) The Hitler myth

Given that all Hitler's work ended in disastrous failure, this raises a number of questions: for example, why was he so popular for so long? Was he genuinely popular, or did people merely put up with Hitler and the Nazis through fear of what would happen to them if they complained too loudly? Was his popular image just a myth created by Goebbels's propaganda machine?

There can be no doubt that Hitler's achievements in foreign affairs were extremely popular; with each new success – announcement of rearmament, remilitarization of the Rhineland, the *Anschluss* with Austria and the incorporation of Czechoslovakia into the Reich – it seemed that Germany was reasserting its rightful position as a great power. This was where Goebbels's propaganda probably had its greatest impact on public opinion, building up Hitler's image as the charismatic and infallible Messiah who was destined to restore the greatness of the Fatherland. Even though there was little enthusiasm for war, Hitler's popularity reached new heights in the summer of 1940 with the rapid defeat of France.

There is evidence too that Hitler himself was genuinely popular, although some sections of the Nazi party were not. Gotz Aly argued that ordinary Germans genuinely believed Hitler's promise that he would raise their living standards and many of them had personal experience of improvement. Ian Kershaw, in his earlier work, *The Hitler Myth*, showed that Hitler was seen as being somehow above the unpleasantness of day-to-day politics, and people did not associate him with the excesses of the more extreme party members. The middle and propertied classes were grateful that Hitler had restored law and order; they even approved of the concentration camps, believing that communists and other 'anti-social troublemakers' deserved to be sent there. The propaganda machine

helped, by portraying the camps as centres of re-education where undesirables were turned into useful citizens.

However, Richard J. Evans (in *The Third Reich in Power,* 2006) does not go along with the view that Hitler enjoyed widespread support after his first few years in power. He believes that the endless propaganda – in the newspapers, over the radio, in the cinema and in the theatre – together with the experiments in education, the limits on what types of culture were allowed and the constant military parades and Nazi celebrations simply led to boredom and escapism after the initial novelty wore off. Evans argues that the relative lack of opposition can be at least partly explained by the fact that people developed survival strategies, keeping clear of politics and immersing themselves in private, family and church life. Fear of arrest and violence were still the main reason why the vast majority of people merely tolerated the Nazis. There can be no doubt that it was difficult and risky to criticize the regime; the government controlled all the media, so that the normal channels of criticism that exist in a modern democratic society were not available to ordinary Germans. Anyone who tried even to initiate discussion about Nazi policies risked the threats of informers, the Gestapo and the concentration camps.

It was during 1941 that Hitler's image became seriously tarnished. As the war dragged on, and Hitler declared war on the USA, doubts about his infallibility began to creep in. The realization gradually dawned that the war could not be won. In February 1943, as news of the German surrender at Stalingrad spread, a group of students at Munich university courageously issued a manifesto: 'The nation is deeply shaken by the destruction of the men of Stalingrad … the World War 1 corporal has senselessly and irresponsibly driven three hundred and thirty thousand German men to death and ruin. Führer, we thank you!' Six of the leaders were arrested by the Gestapo and executed, and several others were given lengthy jail sentences. After that the majority of people remained loyal to Hitler, and there was no popular uprising against him. The only significant attempt to overthrow him was made by a group of army leaders in July 1944; after the failure of that plot to blow Hitler up, the general public remained loyal to the bitter end, partly through fear of the consequences if they were seen to have turned against the Nazis, and partly through fatalism and resignation.

(d) A weak dictator?

It was the German historian Hans Mommsen, writing in 1966, who first suggested that Hitler was a 'weak dictator'. He meant, apparently, that in spite of all the propaganda about the charismatic leader and the man of destiny, Hitler had no special programme or plan, and simply exploited circumstances as they occurred. Martin Broszat, in his 1969 book *The Hitler State*, developed this theme further, arguing that many of the policies attributed to Hitler were in fact instigated or pressed on him by others and then taken up by Hitler.

The opposite view, that Hitler was an all-powerful dictator, also has its strong proponents. Norman Rich, in *Hitler's War Aims* (vol. 1, 1973), believed that Hitler was 'master in the Third Reich'. Eberhard Jäckel has consistently held to the same interpretation ever since his first book about Hitler appeared in 1984 (*Hitler in History*): he used the term 'monocracy' to describe Hitler's 'sole rule'.

In his recent massive, two-volume biography of Hitler, Ian Kershaw suggests a 'half-and-half' interpretation. He emphasizes the theory of 'working towards the Führer' – a phrase used in a speech in 1934 by a Nazi official who was explaining how government policy took shape:

> It is the duty of every single person, to attempt in the spirit of the Führer to work towards him. Anyone making mistakes will notice it soon enough. But the one who

> works correctly towards the Führer along his lines and towards his aim, will in future have the finest reward of suddenly one day attaining the legal confirmation of his work.

Kershaw explains how this worked: 'initiatives were taken, pressures created, legislation instigated – all in ways which fell into line with what were taken to be Hitler's aims, and without the dictator necessarily having to dictate. … In this way, policy became increasingly radicalized.' The classic example of this way of working was the gradual introduction of the Nazi campaign against the Jews. It was a method of working which had the advantage that if any policy went wrong, Hitler could dissociate himself from it and blame somebody else.

In practice, therefore, this was hardly the method of a 'weak dictator'. Nor did he always wait for people to 'work towards him'. When occasion demanded it, he was the one who took the initiative and got what he wanted; for example, all his early foreign policy successes, the suppression of the SA in 1934, and the decisions that he took in 1939–40 during the early part of the war, when he reached the peak of his popularity – there was nothing weak about any of this. People who knew him well recognized how he became more 'masterful' as his confidence grew. Otto Dietrich, Hitler's Press Chief, described in his memoirs how Hitler changed: he 'began to hate objections to his views and doubts on their infallibility. … He wanted to speak, but not to listen. He wanted to be the hammer, not the anvil.'

Clearly Hitler could not have carried out Nazi policies without the support of many influential groups in society – the army, big business, heavy industry, the law courts and the civil service. But equally, without Hitler at the head, much of what happened during those terrible 12 years of the Third Reich would have been unthinkable. Ian Kershaw provides this chilling verdict on Hitler and his regime:

> Never in history has such ruination – physical and moral – been associated with the name of one man. … Hitler's name justifiably stands for all time as that of the chief instigator of the most profound collapse of civilization in modern times. … Hitler was the main instigator of a war leaving over 50 million dead and millions more grieving their lost ones and trying to put their shattered lives together again. Hitler was the chief inspiration of a genocide the like of which the world had never known. … The Reich whose glory he had sought lay at the end wrecked. … The arch-enemy, Bolshevism, stood in the Reich capital itself and presided over half of Europe.

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Part

Communism – Rise and decline

Chapter

14 Russia, 1894–1917

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

When Nicholas II became Tsar in 1894 he was carrying on a Romanov family tradition that had been in place since 1613. Centuries of continuity would shortly disintegrate into years of war, revolution and ultimately abdication. The first major indicator of what was in store came with the military reverse with Japan 1904–5. This catastrophe in foreign policy was mirrored by the domestic revolution of 1905–6. Nicholas survived these major setbacks but remained obstinately opposed to genuine political reform.

The Great War which began in August 1914 was seen by the Tsar as an opportunity to unite the nation against its external enemies. Briefly, this appeared to be a genuine possibility. But by 1916 the costs of war were becoming increasingly apparent. Beyond the terrible sacrifices at the front line, the Russian people became war-weary on the home front. As demonstrations and food shortages became intense, the Tsar's instincts remained to preserve the autocracy through repression. But when it became clear, even to Nicholas, that he no longer had the support of the ruling elite, the army leadership and the rank and file, he agreed to abdicate (February/March 1917). At first, he appears to have been relieved to step away from the terrible responsibilities he carried. However, when the provisional Government that replaced the Romanovs was in turn overthrown by Lenin's Bolshevik Party (October/November 1917) the Tsar and his family were in mortal danger.

14.1 RUSSIA UNDER TSAR NICHOLAS II

As the twentieth century began, the Romanov banner of the Double-Headed Eagle fluttered across an expanse covering one-sixth of the earth's total land surface. The population of Russia, which in 1917 numbered 163 million, reached from the Baltic to the Black Sea, from Poland to the Pacific. The Empire, a feat of racial, ethnic and religious diversity, spread across large parts of both Europe and Asia, including territories, to name just a selection, in Siberia, Armenia, Central Asia, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, Poland, the Germanic port of Riga and the Persian-speaking region of Samarkand. Its borders stretched thousands of miles from the capital, St. Petersburg, to reach the edges of Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Only 40 per cent of this population was classified as ethnic Russian. The empire, a civilization of towering culture, encompassed 104 nationalities and 146 languages. All of these diverse people were ruled by one man, the Tsar of all the Russias, Grand Duke of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland. Small wonder that in Russia's first national census, Tsar Nicholas II listed himself as a 'landowner'! (Figes, 1996 p.6) As Orlando Figes puts it, 'The Romanov dynasty presented to the world a brilliant image of monarchical power and opulence' (Figes, 1996 p.6). Yet it would also be perfectly possible to re-read this opening paragraph and recognize that the sheer scale and massive diversity of the empire represented potential weakness as well as possible strength.

When Nicholas II became Tsar in 1894 his personal authority seemed completely secure. Literally appointed by God, as his representative on earth, the Tsar commanded a standing army of 1 million men, the largest in Europe. His political security was in the hands of an extensive and repressive secret police network. These organizations placed the Tsar at the head of a highly authoritarian, heavily centralized police state. Political parties were outlawed and radical opponents of the regime faced arrest, imprisonment or exile. Public meetings were carefully monitored and the press was strictly controlled. Despite this repressive apparatus, loyalty to the Tsar or 'Little Father', particularly among the huge peasant classes, was intense. The Tsar wielded absolute, autocratic authority and combined this with a significant degree of paternalism. Any earlier legislation could be over-ruled simply by an oral instruction from the Emperor. Yet despite this apparent strength, the Tsar was in mortal danger and his empire faced political and social issues that would eventually coalesce to form a crisis of modernization of the greatest magnitude. In March 1881, Tsar Alexander II, grandfather of Nicholas II, was brutally assassinated. Although, for more than two decades, Alexander had readily displayed a capacity for reform, this was not enough to save him from highly motivated political revolutionaries who despised the Tsarist system.

Shocked by his father's murder, his successor, the physically imposing figure of Alexander III, immediately resolved that his personal regime would be characterized by repression rather than reform. This direction was further shaped by the distinctive influence of Konstantin Pobedonostev who in 1880 had been appointed Procurator of the Holy Synod (the senior government minister responsible for the church). Pobedonostev's world-view was a toxic mix of absolute autocracy, religious orthodoxy and virulent anti-Semitism. While his influence on Alexander III was immediately apparent, he also served as an uncompromising personal tutor to young Nicholas. In 1894, at the age of just forty-nine, Alexander III succumbed to kidney disease, brought on by his excessive consumption of alcohol, and the throne passed prematurely to his son, who became Tsar Nicholas II at the tender age of just twenty-six. Ill-equipped temperamentally or intellectually, the Tsar was thrust into a position which would eventually overwhelm him. First impressions were not favourable. As one insider quickly concluded, 'our young monarch changes his mind with terrifying speed' (Lieven, 1993 p.102). It soon became apparent that the new Tsar, the descendant of colossal figures such as Peter the Great and Catherine II, lacked any clear political programme. In his own rather rueful words, 'when my father died, I was simply the commander of the Escort Squadron of the Hussars' (Lieven, 1993 p.71). A glittering coronation ceremony held in May 1896 at Khodynka Field attracted a crowd estimated at half a million, beguiled by the almost unmissable prospect of free beer and sausage and a souvenir tankard. However, the venue was ill-suited for such a large crowd and hundreds of people were trampled to death. To many observers this was a depressing omen of what was to come.

While across the provinces regional governors exercised significant authority, they were nevertheless personally appointed by the Tsar and could be instantly dismissed. The likelihood of political reform appeared slim. When, in 1895 Provincial local councils or Zemstvo suggested an extension of representative institutions the Tsar dismissed this as 'senseless dreams' (Traynor, 1991 p.70). Furthermore, Nicholas II proclaimed, 'let all know that I, devoting all my strength to the welfare of the people, will uphold the principle of autocracy as firmly and unflinchingly as my late unforgettable father'. While these might sound like the words of a strong autocrat, the Tsar's personality made him unsuitable for that role. Figes' analysis is that

> it would be mistaken to assume, as so many historians have done, that Nicholas's failure stemmed from a fundamental 'weakness of will'. The generally accepted wisdom has been that Nicholas was a passive victim of history who became

> increasingly mystical and indifferent towards his own fate as he realized his growing powerlessness against the revolution … Beneath his docile exterior, Nicholas had a strong desire to rule … He stubbornly defended his autocratic prerogatives against the encroachments of his ambitious ministers … It was not a 'weakness of will' that was the undoing of the last Tsar but, on the contrary, a wilful determination to rule from the throne, despite the fact that he clearly lacked the necessary qualities to do so.
>
> (Figes, 1996 p.21)

One expert biographer, Robert Service, summarizes Nicholas's personality as 'modest, inadequate, rigid'. Further probing leads to the conclusion that he liked the simple life. There was

> an ascetic aspect in Nicholas's character, and even on winter nights he left the window open … The emperor, mild of manner, was tough as old boots. He was indifferent to luxury … His trousers were on the scruffy side and his boots were dilapidated. For food, he favoured simple Russian dishes like beetroot soup, cabbage soup or porridge – European-style refined cuisine was not to his liking … He thought of himself as a quintessential Russian … His actions were those of a ruler who always thought he was right. He dealt with public disparagement by cocooning himself in the warmth of his family … He lived and breathed extreme conservatism.
>
> (Service, 2017 p.41–54)

We can safely conclude that multiple aspects of his personality and working practices were unsatisfactory. Frequently outspoken in his anti-Semitism, while often neglecting matters of state of the highest importance, he allowed himself to become immersed in trivia and it is astonishing to note that the Tsar did not even have a private secretary.

(a) Economic Growth

While Nicholas II had apparently set himself against political reform, the Russian economy at the end of the nineteenth century appeared initially to have a more progressive look. At first glance, Alexander III's economic legacy seemed robustly healthy. A period of relative domestic stability had been supported by significant economic growth fuelled to a large extent by French economic investment. The audacious construction of the Trans-Siberian railway from the early 1890s onwards seemed to exemplify Russia's ambition and capacity for growth. The emergence of modern production methods in rail, iron, steel, silk and chemicals and the accompanying growth of Moscow and St Petersburg as industrial centres, all indicated Russia's strength. Unfortunately for the young Tsar, the overall picture was much more complicated. Massive investment was needed in the countryside, many elements of the 'state's finances were in increasing disarray' (Lieven, 1993 p.82) and urban poverty was widespread.

Therefore, it was precisely at this time of rapid industrial growth that the Tsar who presided over it was most at risk. For the average, hard-pressed Russian citizen, the costs of the industrial revolution were more apparent than the benefits. For example, in the capital, St Petersburg, rapidly expanding textiles factories were designed to maximize profit, regardless of the welfare of the workers. Dangerous, fast-moving machinery, noxious fumes from dyes in ill-ventilated factories, notoriously harsh discipline and a constant risk of fire, combined to make work a grim experience. On average, in the 1890s, textile workers toiled between twelve and fourteen hours each day, for low pay, often around 12 roubles a month, while subject to brutal discipline and a comprehensive system of fines. Larger factories offered company housing in grim barracks. The contrast with the opulence

of the Tsar's palaces was glaring. Unsurprisingly, strike action, while risky, became more widespread, reaching a peak for the 1890s in 1899, with 97,000 recorded participants. While trade unions were illegal and police scrutiny intense, it was nevertheless a sign that a sense of grievance among the Russian people was increasingly apparent. Industrial action was becomingly increasingly evident. In 1896 a series of strikes took place in the textile mills around St Petersburg. This was notable for the increased militancy of many female factory workers, a further portent of what was to come in 1917.

(b) Life in the countryside

Incredibly, the situation in the countryside was probably even worse. Towards the end of the nineteenth century approximately 80 per cent of Russia's population comprised peasant farmers. It is believed that the peasants inhabited as many as three-quarters of a million rural settlements and the vast majority stayed in that one place for the whole of their lives. Estimates suggest that almost 70 per cent of the peasants were illiterate, although this figure was rapidly improving. With an average life expectancy under forty, primitive equipment, extremely harsh weather for much of the year and limited investment, the subsistence farming of the peasantry had barely changed over hundreds of years. Individual peasants rarely owned their own land. Instead, communes, known as obschina, owned land, allocated strips of land and levied taxes.

Discipline was in the hands of locally appointed officials known as Land Captains, who, until 1904, routinely applied corporal punishment. Exile to Siberia was applied for serious breaches of communal law. A catastrophic famine which hit the Volga region especially hard led to an estimated death toll of 400,000. Of peasants called up for military service in 1890, around 64 per cent were judged unfit on grounds of ill health. In broad terms, the peasants' hunger for both more food and more land went unheard, but for the time being the majority retained an almost touching religious faith in the Tsar. As Orlando Figes explains, 'In the mind of the ordinary peasant, the Tsar was not just a kingly ruler but a god on earth' (Figes, 1996 p.11). When the Tsar made carefully choreographed visits to peasant villages, he knew that he would be given the traditional ecstatic welcome, including the old custom of him being presented with bread and salt. But beneath these quaint and hallowed traditions fundamental pressure for social change was building.

(c) Political unrest

In a further worrying sign for the regime, troops had to be deployed in 1902 to quell significant street demonstrations in Rostov-on-Don. In the opening years of the twentieth century arson attacks targeting the manor houses of the aristocracy became increasingly common. Violence towards the rich was accompanied by a sustained programme of assassinations, targeting the ruling elite. In March 1898, in the rustic setting of a Minsk log house, nine determined revolutionaries formed the Russian Social-Democratic Worker's Party. It was a development that initially appeared modest but would ultimately prove fatal for the Tsarist regime. Stephen Kotkin estimates that by '1900 at least 100 political murders had been notched in imperial Russia' (Kotkin, 2015 p.61). In just one high-profile example, the education minister Sipyagin was murdered by members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (known as the SRs) in April 1902. Alarmed by these radical developments, the only response in the regime's play-book was repression. In the aftermath of the assassination Tsar Nicholas II told his newly appointed interior minister Vyacheslav von Plehve that 'it's time to crack down' (Montefiore, 2016 p.510). As Simon Sebag Montefiore puts it, 'Plehve turned the Okhrana into the world's most sophisticated secret police.' The organization

enthusiastically embraced the latest techniques of surveillance, finger-printing and the compilation of suspect dossiers, although it is also noteworthy that the Tsar himself treated the very organization charged with protecting him with some disdain and seldom met with his own police chief. On the other hand, Nicholas and the Okhrana's capacity for repression was matched by their shared fondness for anti-Semitism and pogroms. Plehve's repressive activities made him multiple enemies and, in the summer of 1904, he was assassinated by a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. This underlined the fact that repression alone would not be enough to remove violent dissent and showed the perilous position even of those at the highest end of the government.

(d) War with Japan – 1904–5

These developments indicate clearly enough the great pressure being directed towards the Tsarist regime. In such circumstances an autocratic regime often turns to foreign policy as a way of distracting attention from domestic crises. In 1904 the Tsar, guided by his advisers, decided to pick such a quarrel with Japan. The war was fought over the control of Korea and Manchuria, and its outbreak initially prompted some popular enthusiasm. Yet, by early 1905, after major military setbacks in Port Arthur and Mukden, the war began to become a source of acute concern. At the end of May, Russia's Baltic fleet was annihilated by the Japanese Navy in the Straits of Tsushima. In a country in which everything was subordinated to the military, to hear that the pride of Russia's Pacific Fleet had been despatched to the ocean floor was a debacle of the highest order. Simon Sebag Montefiore explains the scale of Russia's defeat but also the Tsar's characteristically numb response to the news: 'The Russians were annihilated, losing 4,380 dead, 5,791 prisoners … and twenty-one ships sunk including six battleships, while the Japanese lost just 117 killed and three torpedo boats.' When the Tsar's picnic party was interrupted for him to be told the shattering news, he 'said nothing. As usual. Went deadly pale' (Montefiore, 2016 p.523). All that remained was a peace treaty signed in August 1905 that conceded control over Korea and Southern Manchuria to Japan and the humiliation was complete. A sense of crisis seemed increasingly to pervade both foreign and domestic policy. This was undoubtedly a personal calamity for the Tsar. He had over-estimated the strength of his own forces and made a similar misjudgement in under-estimating Japan. Finally, there is no doubt that the catastrophic failure with Japan had sharp consequences for the Tsar on the domestic front.

14.2 BLOODY SUNDAY AND THE 1905 REVOLUTION

On the bitterly cold morning of 22 January 1905, approximately 200,000 peaceful protestors marched towards the Winter Palace to present a petition to the Tsar. Headed by a well-known priest, Father Gapon, the protestors respectfully asked, 'to reduce the working day to eight hours, to provide a minimum wage of a rouble a day, and to abolish overtime' (Traynor, 1991 p.76). In no sense, at this stage, was this seen as a direct threat to the Tsar. As the large crowds converged on the palace, many of them holding pictures of the Tsar or holy icons, they came face to face with uneasy armed guards and mounted Cossacks. While those at the front were stopped in their tracks, the crowd from behind continued to surge forward. Mistaking the logistics of crowd control for aggression, the twitchy soldiers opened fire on their own people. Hundreds of unarmed men, women and children were killed. The contrast between the poor performance of the Russian military in Japan and their apparent willingness to kill their fellow citizens was highly damaging. In the words of one authority, Bloody Sunday was decisive, transforming a 'peaceful campaign

into a national offensive against the old order' (Ascher, 2001 p.5). Ironically, the Tsar was not even present at the palace as the massacre took place. Early warnings of a large-scale demonstration had prompted Nicholas II to move his family to his elegant residence at Tsarkoe Selo some 15 miles away. His physical distance, however, could not disguise the terribly damaging nature of what became known as 'Bloody Sunday'. A general strike in St Petersburg was followed by the assassination of the Tsar's uncle, the governor-general of Moscow in early February. Throughout 1905, the year of Revolution, spontaneous outbreaks of dissent rocked the regime to its core. It is worth emphasizing that this extreme turbulence took place on a national scale – in marked contrast to the revolution of February/March in which the majority of disorder was confined to the capital, Petrograd.

- April: The First Workers' Council (or Soviet) was established in the Urals.
- May: A naval mutiny was staged at the important base of Kronstadt. Textile workers in Ivanova set up their own Soviets, even though they were illegal.
- June: The crew of the battleship *Potemkin* staged a mutiny.
- October: In the capital, St Petersburg a new Soviet of Workers Deputies was created. Striking railway workers were soon supported by industrial action amongst doctors, teachers, printers, postal workers and even dancers from the imperial ballet. Moscow was particularly hard hit by what had become a national general strike.
- December: More than 500 people lost their lives when a poorly equipped uprising was crushed by the Semenovsky regiment from St Petersburg. Through the course of 1905 the burning and looting of manor houses spread throughout the countryside and this eventually led to the formation of a National Peasants' Union. Finally, and bizarrely, it is worth noting that in the words of Robert Service, 'Nicholas believed that dark Jewish forces had been behind the revolutionary tumult of 1905–1906, and when reactionary nationalist organisations were formed, he gave them his endorsement.' (Service, 2017 p.52)

14.3 HISTORIOGRAPHY OF NICHOLAS II

Historical coverage of Nicholas II has had some limitations. Dominic Lieven's analysis is that invariably attention has focused on 'Nicholas as family man, father of a haemophiliac heir, protector of Rasputin, or victim of the tragedy of Ekaterinburg in July 1918' (Lieven, 1993 preface). In 'The Last Tsar' the Russian playwright Edvard Radzinsky used newly released archive materials and family diaries to examine the Romanov family's traumatic imprisonment and murder. He painted a largely sympathetic, romanticized picture of the Tsar and his family, as this extract illustrates:

> Nicky and Alice make a fine couple. Separated, they wrote each other letters almost every day. Those delicate sheets with small crowns - their letters. He wrote to her from the castle at Spala in Poland, where the Polish kings had had an ancient hunting lodge and where the Russian tsar loved to hunt. He wrote from the imperial train taking him to Livadia, where his father lay dying. Hundreds of his letters. And hundreds of her replies. Endless incantations of love.
>
> (Radzinsky, 1992 p.37)

Upon the abdication of the Tsar in February/March 1917 the provisional Government published a biography depicting Nicholas II as 'poorly educated and arrogant'. A man

whose 'active military service had consisted only in the effort of putting on a uniform' (Service, 2017 p.215). Bringing this matter up to date, Robert Service makes some important observations on the historiography of the last tsar. He notes, 'Interest in Nicholas II has waned among professional historians, who have been more attracted by earlier Russian Emperors such as Peter the Great and Catherine the Great' (Service, 2017 p.1006). Service notes that while it is well documented that the marriage of Nicholas and Alexandra was one of mutual passion and support, the traditional picture of Nicholas and Alexandra was often rather bland. Moving on from this rather benign picture, Service also describes how subsequent research has shed new light on the tense relationship between the Tsar and Prime Minister Stolypin as well as highlighting the close connections between Nicholas and extreme anti-Semitic organizations.

There is widespread agreement that on the plus side, the last Tsar was an utterly devoted family man, dutiful and God-fearing, almost excruciatingly polite. He had a mystical belief in the union of Tsar and people. However, vision, imagination, and a willingness to listen to political alternatives were all conspicuous by their absence. Scrutiny of his letters and personal diary reveal a man obsessed with the minor details and mind-numbing minutiae of his daily routine, including his walks and exercise regime, coffee breaks, the weather and the dazzling uniforms of his beloved Imperial Guards. Moved to tears by the death of his faithful dog, the Tsar often omitted to mention in his diary the troubling events of state that carried so much importance (Ascher, 2001 p.92). Service offers some important conclusions on the matter of the Tsar's personality: 'There is a question about whether he was truly as mentally rigid as his enemies claimed. The evidence suggests that those enemies had a point. In captivity he had the time to recognise any of his mistakes and rectify his basic analysis. In fact, he did nothing of the kind' (Service, 2017 p.1015). Most of all, the Tsar's blind commitment to the notion of autocracy, even when that pointed towards utter disaster, would prove his undoing. In these circumstances, the importance of clear-headed advice from his closer advisors would be hard to under-estimate. Sadly, many of the Tsar's ministers were weak nonentities. Those who had most to offer, namely Witte and Stolypin, ultimately attracted the Tsar's displeasure precisely because of their capacity to envisage genuine reform.

14.4 THE TSAR'S MINISTERS

(a) Sergei Witte (1849–1915)

Within the constraints of the Tsarist system, Witte proved to be a bold, industrious, imaginative, albeit at times, arrogant servant of the crown. He served as Minister of Finance (1893–1903), Chairman of the Committee of Ministers (1903–5) and Prime Minister (1905–6). His academic career, at an elite university, studying physics and mathematics underlined his intellectual capacity. With a background in the increasingly important railway industry, Witte came into the government as Minister of Communications during the 1880s. In 1893 he was appointed to the prestigious post of Minister of Finance. Witte was clever and ambitious but also rather overtly manipulative. Building on the work of able predecessors, he instilled energy and urgency into the Tsar's economic policy. Lieven's verdict is that 'few honest and informed observers of Russian government in the 1890s doubted that Witte was the Tsar's most impressive servant' (Lieven, 1993 p.74). Ultimately, this was not enough to secure the long-term support of the Tsar. In private, Nicholas condemned his gifted minister as a 'chameleon' (Kotkin, 2015 p.91) and from 1903 until his resignation in 1906, their relationship progressively deteriorated. Witte's ability and arrogance also ensured that he had plenty of enemies within the court. Despite this, Witte's standing was temporarily enhanced by what was widely seen as

his effective performance in negotiating a difficult peace settlement with Japan in New Hampshire, USA, in 1905. His position bolstered; Witte was instrumental in the Tsar's concessions to the revolutionary upheaval of 1905 exemplified in the October Manifesto. Such liberal ideas, of course, placed self-limiting constraints on Witte's relationship with Nicholas. The Tsar and, just as importantly, the ultra-conservatives who surrounded him were never truly comfortable with Witte and believed that he was arrogantly trying to expand his own power base. It seems fair to say that the more able the Tsar's minister, the more suspicious the royal master became. In private, the Tsarina herself contributed to the malaise, describing Nicholas's ministers as 'cowards' (Figes, 1996 p.12). Witte resigned in April 1906 by which time he had concluded that he no longer enjoyed the Tsar's confidence. Scholar Sean McMeekin concludes, 'By restoring some modicum of law and order to the country, Witte had bought the regime time to sort out Russia's new, quasi-constitutional order, even if he was not able to see things through himself' (McMeekin, 2017 p.44).

(b) Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin (1862–1911)

While it could be argued that the tumultuous events of 1905 fell short of a genuine revolution it is clear that the Tsar was profoundly shaken by the threat to his position. Amid the turmoil, it came to the Tsar's attention that the Governor of Saratov province, P.A. Stolypin, had been a particularly energetic and effective opponent of rural disturbances. Skilfully dealing with a potentially disastrous doctor's strike, targeting the ringleaders of arson attacks, taking decisive, even brutal action against troublemakers, bringing reassurance to nervous landowners, showing personal bravery when he was shot at and wounded, and yet wanting to attend to the wretched conditions of the poor, Stolypin truly appeared to be a multi-faceted politician. Following a personal meeting with the Tsar, March 1904, an elated, highly ambitious Stolypin confided in a letter to his wife that he had found the God-given ruler, 'affectionate and loquacious' (Ascher, 2001 p.40). The descendant of Russian rural nobility, deeply religious, a skilled linguist, cultivated and widely read, it was hoped that Stolypin could operate a level of repression on a national scale when he was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs in 1906 and before the year was out, Prime Minister.

Stolypin remains an important and controversial figure, worthy of detailed examination. An excellent biography by Abraham Ascher provides valuable insights into his background and early career. In the bloody aftermath of the 1905 revolution Stolypin established a reputation as an energetic opponent of radical upheaval. Stolypin demonstrated considerable personal bravery and showed that he was prepared to stand his ground even in the face of intimidating crowd violence. While Ascher reminds us that Stolypin has been depicted as a 'cold-hearted, ruthless ogre' his more sympathetic view is that he was 'not bloodthirsty' (Ascher, 2001 p.9) and 'he was not a narrow-minded, intolerant bigot'.

Stolypin was staunchly committed to law and order and a dutiful servant of the monarch but also equipped with a virtually unique sense of the reforms needed if Russia was to change course. Ascher's belief is that 'By the time he had assumed national office in 1906 he had developed a fairly sophisticated vision for Russia that he sought to implement as Prime Minister' (Ascher, 2001 p.9). In due course he would also demonstrate a degree of political imagination sadly lacking in his boss. When Stolypin arrived in the capital in April 1906 his stature, work-rate and vision soon began to evoke comparisons with the towering figure of Bismarck who had dominated German history in the later nineteenth century. Based on the premise of authoritarian reform and pragmatic conservatism he became, in Russia at least, 'the first political leader to seek support not only from the traditional center of power, the monarchy, but also from the public at large' (Ascher,

2001 p.11). Yet it could also be argued that this was precisely what caused Stolypin's subsequent fall from grace. As Ascher neatly puts it, 'the tsar, his entourage, and the ultra-conservatives, could not bring themselves to yield a portion of their privileges and prerogatives in return for a reduced, though still significant role in a changed Russia' (Ascher, 2001 p.12). A common thread in the careers of both Witte and Stolypin is that their very engagement with political concessions even though they remained faithful to the Tsar was enough to cause them severe political discomfort.

14.5 THE DUMA: 1906–17

(a) The first Duma: April–July 1906

While the violent backlash following Bloody Sunday was still being felt, the first hint of fundamental political reform was made in the Tsar's October manifesto of 1905. Details of the embryonic representative system were revealed in February 1906. The upper house, or Council of State, had half of its members to be nominated with the remainder to be elected by the zemstvos and higher orders of society. It was always intended that this would closely regulate the lower house, or Duma, which would consist of around 500 deputies elected by universal suffrage from all classes of Russian society, with direct voting in the five largest societies and an electoral college system across the rest of the country. The first Duma was opened with spectacular pomp and circumstance in April 1906. However, any burgeoning sense of democracy was significantly undercut when the Tsar proclaimed the Fundamental Laws which set out the precise powers of the Duma. This made clear that 'Supreme Autocratic power belongs to the Emperor of All Russia', and 'no law can come into existence without His approval' (Traynor, 1991 p.83). The Duma could not appoint ministers, pass laws independently or exercise budgetary control over the military. It could also be dismissed if the Tsar so wished. Despite these major restrictions, the radical complexion of the first Duma meant that it was often critical of government policies.

(b) Stolypin and the dissolution of the first Duma

A dispute over the issue of land reform led to the dissolution of the first Duma in July 1906. Russia's first experiment in constitutional politics had lasted for just ten weeks. While Stolypin was not completely against the idea of the Duma, he disliked the radical complexion of the first one and dissolved it in the expectation that a second one would be much more compliant. But the immediate response was not what Stolypin anticipated. Protests by the Duma deputies, sporadic peasant uprisings, political assassinations and naval mutinies all indicated that the country remained at a volatile crossroads. An attack on Stolypin's private residence leading to injuries to two of his children displayed the intensity of the struggle between autocracy and reform. Stolypin's response was uncompromising. In August 1906 he established field court-martials at which senior figures from the military dealt in secret with serious anti-government crimes. All cases were to be concluded within two days, a defence counsel was not permitted and death sentences could not be commuted and were to be carried out within twenty-four hours. Literally thousands of people were killed in a programme of repression that lasted for years rather than months. During this bloody period the gallows' noose began to be referred to as the 'Stolypin neck tie'. Thousands of those who avoided capital punishment were now banished to remote provinces. Meanwhile, more than a thousand government agents were killed in the same period.

(c) The second Duma: February 1907–June 1907

When the Duma reconvened, its political complexion remained challenging at least as far as the conservatives and ultra-conservatives at the heart of the Tsarist system were concerned. The relaxation of an initial socialist boycott of the first Duma means that left-wing representation in the Duma actually increased. This was countered by the growth of the far-right and anti-Semitic, Union of the Russian People. This shift to the extremes meant that the second Duma was fatally polarized. In March 1907 Stolypin went before the Duma with proposals for land and tax reform, a new insurance scheme for workers, compulsory primary education and some modernizations to the police system. Land reform proved the most problematic element of this reform package. Stolypin was completely opposed to an initiative from the Duma for the introduction of land confiscations. By the summer of 1907 it was clear that the government was openly trying to discredit the Duma. When Stolypin called for the removal of parliamentary immunity for all Social Democratic deputies amid accusations that some of them were inciting revolution it was clear that the second Duma was heading the way of the first.

(d) The third Duma: 1907–12

Determined to put behind him what Stolypin regarded as an obdurate and problematic Duma, the Prime Minister now took the step of altering the electoral procedures with the aim of producing a third, more compliant version. In direct breach of the Fundamental Laws Stolypin now sought to restrict the franchise in favour of the wealthy urban classes and the landed gentry and clearly at the expense of the workers and the peasants. When the Third Duma was established in November 1907 it was clearly very different to its predecessors. The extreme right was now more powerful than ever while representation of the Social Democrats in the Duma collapsed. The Third Duma now appeared to be a much more compliant and socially conservative body than ever before. While it was now designed merely as a rubber stamp for government legislation even the Third Duma faced dissolution at times. Nevertheless, the willingness of the Duma deputies to ultimately submit to governmental authority meant that the Third Duma became the first one to last for its allotted five-year time span. While Stolypin and his more conservative colleagues had got their way, the damaging consequence was that the experiment in constitutional politics had effectively been derailed and the divide between the masses and the government seemed as wide as ever.

(e) The fourth Duma: 1912–17

The electoral franchise was now significantly restricted. It was completely dominated by men of property and wealth and therefore much more conservative than its predecessors. While this arrangement might have been expected to lead to a period of rapprochement between the Tsar and the ruling classes events now took a damaging turn. First, Stolypin's political gifts and phenomenal work-ethic (he frequently worked for eighteen hours in a day) were not enough to protect him from the vagaries of court-life in St Petersburg. He commanded respect rather than affection. His attempts to curtail the damaging impact of Rasputin on the reputation of Nicholas II only earned disapproval from the Tsar. Most historians agree that by 1909–10 Stolypin's political star was beginning to wane. Stolypin maintained a fatalistic attitude towards his personal safety, under no illusions that he had many enemies who wished him serious harm. In September 1911, he was shot at close quarters while attending a theatre in Kyiv. He succumbed to his wounds four days later.

While by this time Stolypin and the Tsar had grown apart, it is also true that his brutal murder deprived Russia of its ablest statesman at a time when he still had a significant contribution to make. For Nicholas II, who did not sufficiently appreciate Stolypin's talents, it would leave a catastrophic vacuum. After Stolypin's death it became apparent that Nicholas's government consisted largely of spineless mediocrities. It did not take long for a further downward lurch in Russia's fortunes to present itself. In April 1912 an upsurge in labour unrest culminated in a strike at the Lena goldmines in northeast Siberia. When troops fired into the crowd, approximately 270 men were killed and 250 wounded. It seemed that the Tsar and the Russian people were on a collision course. By now the regime was once more heading towards a crisis.

14.6 RASPUTIN

In the same period as the tangled issue of the Duma and constitutional reform, Nicholas II also had to contend with the divisive figure of Rasputin. Fate had decreed that the personal fortunes of the Tsar would now overlap with the political problems regarding constitutional change that beset the monarchy. The Tsarina's prime task had been to furnish her husband with a healthy male heir. After four daughters, and ten years of marriage, a boy named Alexei duly arrived in 1904. Nicholas and Alexandra were briefly elated but it did not take long for the family and the royal doctors to recognize that there was something seriously wrong with the Tsarevich. A series of traumatic bleeds led to the shattering diagnosis of haemophilia. Wracked with fear about the future of their son, fate placed before the Romanovs a man who appeared to have been sent as the young boy's saviour. A ragged, dissolute, but apparently fearless and mystical figure arrived at the court from Pokrovskoe in distant Siberia. Rasputin first met the Royal Family in the autumn of 1905. Over the course of the next five years, he was able to grow increasing close to the royal family and the Tsarina in particular. When the Tsarevich suffered particularly intense bouts of illness, Rasputin's calm assurances that the boy would live proved intoxicating to his anxious mother. Despite some periods of absence on Rasputin's part, their relationship grew steadily closer, never more so than when the Tsarevich fell critically ill during a trip to Spala in 1913. Rasputin's calm intervention and religious conviction when the Tsar's team of physicians seemed at a loss persuaded Alexsi's parents that the holy-man was personally indispensable to their family. While the Royal Family saw a *starets* ('holy man') and faith-healer, Rasputin also attracted fierce criticism from his manifold enemies.

Deemed by some scholars as effectively unworthy of serious academic scrutiny, Rasputin nevertheless played a vital role in undermining the reputation of the Royal Family. This would probably have been damaging enough at any time in a gossip-ridden society such as St Petersburg but during the bitter course of the First World War, the link between Rasputin and the Tsarina came to have devastating consequences. A comprehensive and reliable biography of Rasputin by Douglas Smith (2016) provides helpful insights beyond what has at times been a rather sensational and lurid historiography. While most studies have maintained that it was the positive impact on the Tsarevich's health, and the calm reassurances Rasputin gave to Alexandra at times of medical crisis that enabled him to become a trusted confidante of the Royal Family, Smith contends that other important factors were also at work. He reminds us that by 1914 Rasputin was consistently pitching an anti-war message to the Tsar in the face of overwhelmingly belligerent advice from the military. He was also in the habit of offering advice on the Tsar's personal schedule as well as providing frank assessments of the Tsar's ministers. Dominic Lieven takes an alternative view: 'The danger was not the influence that the *starets* ("holy man") actually wielded, which was always wildly exaggerated by Petersburg society gossip. Before 1914, despite endless stories, there is no evidence that he had any political role or influence' (Lieven, 1993 p.168).

There is broad agreement that he seemed to offer calm and peace of mind to a Royal Family constantly buffeted by the damaging course of events. Besmirched across the popular press, monitored by the Okhrana and sharply criticized in the Duma, Rasputin became an increasingly problematic figure for the Tsar's reputation. While the Royal Family saw Rasputin as beyond reproach, the public increasingly saw debauchery. Graphic rumours of an affair with the Tsarina scandalized the claustrophobic St Petersburg society. More importantly perhaps, while Nicholas and Alexandra saw Rasputin as a court priest and personal confessor, his repeated calm assurances that 'the sun will shine through over our armies, goodness will win' (Smith, 2016 p.547) even when the writing was on the wall for the Russian war effort was in a sense deeply damaging. The Tsar's wilful refusal to change course would ultimately cost him his throne and his life.

Remarkably, the period 1913–14 marked something of an uplift in the personal fortunes of the Tsar. This is despite the fact that the structural problems that faced Russia at the turn of the century were still in place and the Tsar's most able ministers had departed the stage. In general, the carefully choreographed national celebrations marking three hundred years of Romanov rule in 1913 were greeted with a considerable degree of enthusiasm. It seemed that to some extent, the Tsar had been able to return to the natural reservoir of goodwill that had existed when he first ascended the throne.

14.7 RUSSIA AT WAR: 1914–17

The recent upturn in popular support for the Tsar became even more pronounced as the great European powers moved to war in the summer of 1914. Hostility to Germany and the rise of Russian nationalism, two sides of the same coin, both seemed to bode well for the personal fortunes of Nicholas II. The origins of the First World War are examined in great detail in Chapter 1 but it can be re-emphasized here that historians now believe that Russia played a key role in unleashing the conflict. When Austria–Hungary, backed by Germany, exerted huge pressure on Serbia over the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Russia stood steadfastly by its relatively weak neighbour. David Stevenson asks the question 'Why … did Russia not simply abandon Serbia?' (Stevenson, 2003 p.109) instead of doggedly sticking to an allegiance that would bring such devastating consequences. As the July Crisis unfolded, 'crucial to the escalation process was the Russian decision not only to stand by Serbia but also to start the militarization of the crisis' (Stevenson, 2003 p.112). The Tsar lacked the intelligence and imagination to see beyond the prevailing chauvinistic mind-set of the Russian court. As Lieven explains,

> to understand why Russia went to war in 1914 it is also necessary to grasp the values and mentality of the Russian ruling elites, including Nicholas II. In old regime Europe the nobleman was brought up to defend his public reputation and honour at all costs, if necessary, with sword in hand. The ethic of the duel still prevailed in aristocratic and, in particular, military circles. No crime was worse than cowardice.
>
> (Lieven, 1993 p.190)

This was the context in which it made sense for the Tsar to feel that the only way to preserve Russian honour was to go to the battlefield. What Winston Churchill would later term 'The Unknown War' was about to begin (N. Stone, 1975 p.11).

In August 1914 the country was swept by a genuine wave of emotion and patriotism as the Tsar took the county into the war that would eventually destroy him. Tens of thousands of Russians gathered outside the Winter Palace in St Petersburg to assert their loyalty to Nicholas, the flag and the nation. If it appeared that the nation was intoxicated not everyone shared the mood. As early as February 1914 a far-sighted and wise government

minister, P.N. Durnovo, a member of the Council of State, begged the emperor to avoid war at all costs. Durnovo predicted that a protracted conflict, heavy casualties and military reversals could lead to social revolution, the disintegration of the army and ultimately social anarchy.

Durnovo's prophetic warnings went unheeded and at the end of July, Russia's mobilization began. The scale and speed of Russia's move to the battlefield took her enemies by surprise. As American authority David R. Stone puts it, 'the front lines in the east advanced and retreated for hundreds of miles, putting over one hundred thousand square miles of territory under foreign occupation' (D. Stone, 2015 p.1). The early stages of the war saw masses of Russian troops marching north into East Prussia against inferior German numbers. At the same time similar numbers were sent into Galicia and Bukovina with the aim of destroying Austria–Hungary's Imperial and Royal armies before conquering the Carpathians and advancing across the Hungarian Plains. These military actions opened up approximately 800 kilometres of front. Initially, it might have appeared that the much-vaunted Russian steamroller would flatten everything in its path. With multiple points of intense contact, in forest, swamps, marshlands and mountainside, troops on both sides found themselves moving from the rudimentary deployments of the nineteenth century to the factory wars of the early twentieth century. Eventually, fighting would spread across the Bohemian crown lands of Austria–Hungary, East Prussia, Galicia, the Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Serbia and the Carpathian Mountains. The initial military response was staggering in its scale. Russia's standing armies and trained reserves numbered almost 6 million men. Given these advantages over Austria–Hungary in both numbers and machine guns it is not surprising to learn that Russia enjoyed several early successes.

In spite of these numbers, the Tsar's forces also suffered deeply damaging reverses as early as August 1914 at the hands of the German Army. In the battle of Tannenberg, in a heavily wooded region, across four horrific days, the Russian army lost an estimated 70,000 men with a further 100,000 taken prisoner. This bloody engagement revealed in stark terms that numerical advantage, on its own, was not enough. Dennis E. Showalter notes that

> Virtually every account of the Tannenberg campaign mentions the Russian practice of sending radio messages in the clear, and suggests it as another paradigm for the weakness of the Tsarist empire. It seems almost a shame to diminish the legend by mentioning that the Germans did not always code their messages either. Like their Russian counter-parts German military codes were simple substitution ciphers – childish by modern standards.
>
> (Showalter, 2004 p.169)

Across vast expanses of forest and swamp the myth of Russian invincibility was destroyed for ever. Broken by these loses, a shattered General Samsonov, commander of the Russian Second Army and distinguished veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, took his own life. W. Bruce Lincoln explains that 'it fell to the Germans to bury his remains. They, in retrospect, pronounced the last words over his fallen body. "One cannot deny the persistence and energy with which he commanded his army … The task given to him simply was beyond his strength"' (Bruce Lincoln, 1994 p.76). In late August, into September, at the battle of the Masurian Lakes, a second invading army was defeated. Acting 'decisively if unheroically' (Showalter, 2004 p.326), General Rennenkampf ordered a general retreat, in which 'his corps and division commanders, eager to avoid the German buzz saw, forced the pace. Withdrawing as far as twenty-five miles a day, the Russians literally ran faster than the Germans could chase them … No one in the Russian supply services wanted to be the last man on German soil … Others simply took to the forests' (Showalter, 2004 p.326).

In the detailed military campaign histories, the issue of morale has sometimes been a little neglected. But it is now clear that the brief mood of optimism and patriotism of early August 1914 was hard for the generals and their men on both sides to maintain when they witnessed sobering images of badly wounded men, tightly packed into open wagons en route to hospital. Even a battle-hardened General Staff Officer in Austria's Imperial Army was moved by the suffering he witnessed:

> A warren of trenches running in all different directions, all filled with cartridge cases, broken rifles, bent bayonets, wooden board covers shot to pieces, rotten straw, ground-water and food that had been left uneaten. Often, prayer books were still lying there, Austrian caps, Prussian spiked helmets, Russian wool hats, followed by entire networks of newly-dug, unused trenches, burned-down houses, villages shelled to rubble, over-turned telegraph lines, and demolished bridges. Groups of wailing, crying farmers and their wives and children passed, who did not know where they could go; then there was a heap of dead soldiers, then we saw long rows of freshly dug graves, and numerous horse carcasses. In the villages, terrible images of destruction, the population for the most part transported out or fled, the fields trampled to mud and in the sky vast flocks of screaming, scavenging crows.
>
> (Rauchensteiner, 2014 p.272)

It was therefore a testament to the scale of Russia's commitment and resilience that by the start of 1915 the war on the Eastern Front had stabilized along the lines of her western frontier running from the Baltic southwards to Rumania. This was not to say that damaging military reverses, such as in the second major engagement at the Masurian Lakes, this time in the winter of early 1915, were a thing of the past, but it had become clear that Russia would not quickly succumb. By now, the general headquarters of the Russian forces, or Stavka, were based in the drab, garrison town of Mogilev. It was here that the Tsar, in September 1915, implemented the patriotic but badly misguided decision to dismiss Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, so that he could take supreme command of Russia's armed forces. As W. Bruce Lincoln explains, Nicholas had taken up, 'one of the most awesome burdens ever to confront a monarch' (Bruce Lincoln, 1994 p.165). This well-intentioned act of self-sacrifice soon put Nicholas under immense personal strain. Nevertheless, when the weather had relented sufficiently for the 1916 campaign season to resume, the Russian army was larger and better-equipped than at any point since the start of the war. Norman Stone's classic work *The Eastern Front 1914–1917* remains a key text in this area and his appraisal of Russia's preparedness and resilience remains of major importance. In his words, 'the country proved able to produce war-goods in fair quantity. By 1916, it could produce aircraft, guns, gas-masks, hand-grenades, wireless sets and the rest … in quantities sufficient to win the war in the east if other things had been equal. By September 1916, for instance, Russia could produce 4,500,000 shells per month' (N. Stone, 1975 p.13). It should be pointed out that American expert David R. Stone has more recently contested his namesake's view:

> Though Norman Stone in his *Eastern Front* has argued that the shell shortage was overblown, this seems incorrect. Soviet military planners certainly *acted* throughout the 1920s and 1930s as if they had experienced a shell shortage and would take any measures necessary to guarantee that they never would again. In part as a result of their experiences during World War 1, they pushed for and won from their civilian leadership approval for the overwhelming militarization of Soviet society, organizing industry and government for war.
>
> (D. Stone, 2015 p.311)

A serious setback at Lake Naroch early in 1916 was followed by the initially brilliantly successful Brusilov offensive which inflicted heavy losses against Austro-Hungarian forces in the Carpathians in early June. However, an influx of German reserves and the failure of Brusilov's peers to provide the support he needed meant that ultimately his armies had to fall back. Christopher Read's telling conclusion is that 'the ultimate exhaustion and failure of the Brusilov offensive had, once again, knocked all the military cards from the tsar's hand. There was no new perspective and defeat had hastened decline' (Read, 2013 p.46).

These military surges could not hide the massive strain that was being placed on the railway system. Reduced supplies of basic commodities such as grain and fuel, a devastating rise in inflation and the serious depletion in food reserves to the cities had a cumulative impact on the regime. Read points out that 'as early as February 1916 the *Okhrana* (Security Police) had detected "an *anti-dynastic* movement … of profound resentment against the person of the currently reigning emperor"' (Read, 2013 p.47). The brutal murder of Rasputin in December 1916 by a small group of aristocrats motivated by the damage they felt he had long inflicted on the Tsar's reputation, only added to the morbid atmosphere around the court.

As Russia entered the severe winter of 1916–17 the chickens finally came to roost. Russia would not be the only great power to come to the realization that wars could be lost on the home front rather than on the battlefield. In the end, a remarkable 12 million men were mobilized. But this turned out to be a conflict that thrived on huge armies in making its horrific impact. By the end of the war in 1917, Russia had suffered more than 9 million military casualties including 1.7 million killed in action or dying from their wounds. One important development in the historiography of Russia and the Great War is that academics now fully appreciate that we may never accurately know the final, accurate figures for her casualties.

14.8 THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

As the country's military effort gradually disintegrated in the bitter winter of 1916–17 the impact was felt not just on the Eastern Front but also in the societal collapse in the rear. Problems of supply, armaments, foodstuffs, morale and leadership all took a heavy toll. The bitter reality was that the Tsar was ill-equipped to provide genuine military leadership. Becalmed at the grim military headquarters at Mogilev, he became nervous, isolated and physically exhausted. A bleak police report compiled in October 1916 referred to 'an unfair distribution of foodstuffs and articles of prime necessity, an immense and rapid increase in the cost of living, and to inadequacy in sources of supply and means of existence. These factors show that the neglect of the rear is the prime cause of the disorganisation of the huge machine of the state.' The report concluded that 'a terrible crisis is already on the way'. Nothing that happened through Russia's third and by some distance the coldest winter at war did anything to ameliorate the situation.

The capacity of the Russian people to continue to make massive personal sacrifice was almost at an end. Back in the capital, spontaneous demonstrations, often led by women, massive queues for bread and a sheer sense of despondency gripped the city. At the very top, the Tsar doggedly believed he could prevail and as in 1905 there was talk of violent repression of protesters. A critical turning point came towards the end of February 1917 when troops from the Pavlovsky and Volynsky Regiments made clear that this time there would be no repeat of Bloody Sunday. When the troops decided they would not fire on their own people the existential crisis had arrived. After just over 300 years of rule the foundations of the Romanov family business reached a state of collapse. Popular support for the Tsar was at an all-time low. The army had placed the people before the regime.

This bitterest of pills for the Tsar to swallow was confirmed by a series of telegrams from senior generals effectively telling the Tsar that his time on the throne needed to come to an end. Now the politicians in the Duma came to the conclusion that the Tsar had to abdicate the throne. It fell to two conservative members of the Duma, A.I Guchkov and V.V. Shulgin to travel from the capital to meet in person with the Tsar on the royal train at Pskov. They reported to the Tsar that 'Petersburg is a mad-house' and that the time for abdication might have arrived. But the Duma politicians were a step or two behind the military men. General Ruszskii entered the carriage and whispered in Shulgin's ear, 'The decision has already been made: yesterday was a difficult day' (Traynor, 1991 p.90). Two things were striking. One was the lack of deference of those around the Tsar in his final moments on the throne. The second was that Nicholas II appeared tired and yet strangely relieved. It was over.

The historiography of the February Revolution remains a live issue. More than a hundred years after his fall from power one expert concludes that 'the final, fatal blows to tsarism remain shrouded in speculation and uncertainty about key issues' (Read, 2013 p.50). Martin McCauley's classic explanation raises the 'spontaneous' element of the revolution and highlights the role of chance or contingency:

> About 80,000 metal and textile workers went on strike on 23 February. It also happened to be International Women's Day. It had not been organised by any political party, it was the spontaneous expression of increasing exasperation at the privations and shortages, exacerbated by war. There were 160,000 troops garrisoned in the capital, Petrograd. The regime did not appear to be in danger. The strike gradually spread throughout the city, bringing vast numbers of people onto the streets. On 26 February the troops fired on the demonstrators and drew blood but by the following day the mood of the army was different. The Volhynian regiment went over to the people and set out to convince others to do the same. Other regiments followed. The Cossacks, formerly the most reliable of the imperial guards, changed sides and this doomed the dynasty. The revolution had almost been bloodless; only 587 civilians, 655 soldiers and 73 policemen sealed its victory with their blood.
>
> (McCauley, 1994 p.6)

Robert Service underlines what at first appeared to be the unfailing strength of the regime as it moved into the winter of 1916:

> The government vigorously suppressed strikes in late 1916. Its nerve seemed unbreakable: a revolt in central Asia by Moslems unwilling to be conscripted was brutally quelled. But the regime's power was in fact weakening. Workers remained the vanguard of the opposition. In February 1917 … demonstrators filled the capital's thoroughfares. The Petrograd garrison mutinied. The emperor's appeal to front-line headquarters for armed intervention was made too late and indecisively; in any event, the disenchantment with the monarch had by then spread even to the high command. No civilian or military group wanted aristocracy preserved.
>
> (Service, 2017 p.30–1)

Alan Wood offers an emphatic assessment of the ultimate reason behind the Tsar's fall from grace: 'Despite the disaffection of the military, however, it was neither the high command nor the Duma politicians, still less the revolutionary parties, which finally brought about the downfall of "Bloody Nicholas". It was caused by the upsurge of the politically radicalised masses' (Wood, 1987 p.41). However, Chris Read offers a persuasive alternative view:

> Many historians consider the February Revolution to be the archetype of a spontaneous revolution and indeed this is how it appears. In Petrograd strikers took to the streets. Soldiers mutinied in sympathy with the crowd. But the regime had already survived far worse. Only by looking beyond the streets and considering the activities of the elite can we really understand why the monarchy fell. In 1905, in the face of the revolutionary threat, the elite had, when it mattered, fallen into line behind the aristocracy. This is the crucial difference. In 1917 most of the elite abandoned the monarch.
>
> (Traynor, 1991 p.92)

Nicholas' overwhelming reaction was one of relief. He longed to be with his family, several of whom, to make matters even worse, were sick with measles, a serious illness then and now. If he thought that being reunited with his wife and children would bring his suffering to an end, he was badly wrong. Their lives were now in the balance.

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Chapter

15 Russia under Lenin and Stalin

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The first revolution (February/March) overthrew the Tsar and set up a moderate provisional government. When this coped no better than the Tsar, it was itself overthrown by a second uprising: the Bolshevik revolution (October/November).

The new Bolshevik government was shaky at first, and its opponents (known as the Whites) tried to destroy it, causing a bitter civil war (1918–20). Thanks to the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks (Reds) won the civil war, and now calling themselves communists, were able to consolidate their power. Lenin began the task of leading Russia to recovery, but he died prematurely in January 1924.

When Lenin died in January 1924, it was widely expected that Trotsky would take over as leader, but a complex power struggle developed from which Stalin emerged triumphant by the end of 1929. He remained the dominant figure in the USSR, in effect a dictator, right through the Second World War and until his death in 1953 at the age of seventy-three. Immense problems faced communist Russia, which was still only a few years old when Lenin died in January 1924. Industry and agriculture were underdeveloped and inefficient, there were constant food shortages, pressing social and political problems and – many Russians thought – the danger of another attempt by foreign capitalist powers to destroy the new communist state. Stalin made determined efforts to overcome all these problems: he was responsible for the following:

- Five Year Plans to revolutionize industry, carried out between 1928 and 1941;
- collectivization of agriculture, which was completed by 1936;
- introduction of *a totalitarian regime* which, if anything, was even more ruthless than Hitler's system in Germany.

All his policies aroused criticism among some of the 'Old Bolsheviks', especially the speed of industrialization and the harsh treatment of peasants and industrial workers. However, Stalin was determined to eliminate all opposition; in 1934 he began what became known as 'the Purges', in which, over the next three years, some 2 million people were arrested and sentenced to execution or imprisonment in a labour camp for 'plotting against the Soviet state'. There was a vast network of these camps, known as the 'Gulag'. It is estimated that perhaps as many as 10 million people 'disappeared' during the 1930s.

Yet brutal though Stalin's methods were, they seem to have been successful, at least to the extent that when the dreaded attack from the West eventually came, in the form of a massive German invasion in June 1941, the Russians were able to hold out, and eventually end up on the winning side, though at a terrible cost. Stalin was determined that his dictatorship and the one-party state should continue. There was a return to the harsh policies, which had been relaxed to some extent during the war.

15.1 THE REVOLUTIONS: OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1917

The revolutions are still known in Russia as the February and October Revolutions. This is because the Russians were still using the old Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar used by the rest of Europe. Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1918. The events which the Russians term the February Revolution began on 23 February 1917 (Julian), which was 8 March outside Russia. When the Bolsheviks took power on 25 October (Julian), it was 7 November elsewhere. In this section, the Julian calendar is used for internal events in Russia, and the Gregorian calendar for international events such as the First World War, until 1 February 1918.

(a) The provisional government

Most people expected the autocracy of the tsarist system to be replaced by a democratic republic with an elected parliament. The *Duma*, struggling to take control, set up a mainly liberal *provisional government* with Prince George Lvov as prime minister. In July he was replaced by Alexander Kerensky, a moderate socialist. But the new government was just as perplexed by the enormous problems facing it as the Tsar had been. On the night of 25 October a second revolution took place, which overthrew the provisional government and brought the Bolsheviks to power.

(b) Why did the provisional government fall from power so soon?

- It took the unpopular decision to continue the war, but *the June offensive*, *Kerensky's idea*, *was another disastrous failure*. It caused the collapse of army morale and discipline, and sent hundreds of thousands of deserting troops streaming home.
- *The government had to share power with the Petrograd soviet*, an elected committee of soldiers' and workers' representatives, which tried to govern the city. It had been elected at the end of February, before the Tsar's abdication. Other soviets appeared in Moscow and all the provincial cities. When the Petrograd soviet ordered all soldiers to obey only the soviet, it meant that in the last resort, the provisional government could not rely on the support of the army.
- *The government lost support because it delayed elections*, which it had promised, for a Constituent Assembly (parliament), arguing that these were not possible in the middle of a war when several million troops were away fighting. *Another promise not kept was for land reform* – the redistribution of land from large estates among peasants. Tired of waiting, some peasants started to seize land from landlords. The Bolsheviks were able to use peasant discontent to win support.
- Meanwhile, thanks to a new political amnesty, *Lenin was able to return from exile in Switzerland* (April). The Germans allowed him to travel through to Petrograd in a special 'sealed' train, in the hope that he would cause further chaos in Russia. After a rapturous welcome, he urged (in his *April Theses*) that the Bolsheviks should cease to support the provisional government, that all power should be taken by the soviets and that Russia should withdraw from the war.
- *There was increasing economic chaos*, with inflation, rising bread prices, lagging wages and shortages of raw materials and fuel. Industry was severely handicapped by a shortage of investment. In the midst of all this, Lenin and the Bolsheviks put forward what seemed to be a realistic and attractive policy: a separate peace with Germany to get Russia out of the war, all land to be given to the peasants, workers' control in the factories and more food at cheaper prices.

- *The government lost popularity because of the 'July Days'*. On 3 July there was a huge demonstration of workers, soldiers and sailors, who marched on the Tauride Palace where both the provisional government and the Petrograd soviet were meeting. They demanded that the soviet should take power, but the members refused to take the responsibility. The government brought loyal troops from the front to restore order and accused the Bolsheviks of trying to launch an uprising; it was reported, falsely, that Lenin was a German spy. At this, the popularity of the Bolsheviks declined rapidly; Lenin fled to Finland and other leaders were arrested. But about 400 people had been killed during the violence, and Prince Lvov, who was deeply shocked by the July Days, resigned. He was replaced by Alexander Kerensky.
- *The Kornilov affair embarrassed the government* and increased the popularity of the Bolsheviks. General Kornilov, the army commander-in-chief, viewed the Bolsheviks as traitors; he decided it was time to move against the soviet, and he brought troops towards Petrograd (August). However, many of his soldiers mutinied and Kerensky ordered Kornilov's arrest. Army discipline seemed on the verge of collapse; public opinion swung against the war and in favour of the Bolsheviks, who were still the only party to talk openly about making a separate peace. By October they had won a majority over the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries (SRs) in both the Petrograd and Moscow soviets, though they were in a minority in the country as a whole. Leon Trotsky (who had just become a Bolshevik in July) was elected Chairman of the Petrograd soviet.
- In mid-October, *urged on by Lenin*, *the Petrograd soviet took the crucial decision to attempt to seize power*. He was strongly supported by Joseph Stalin and Yakov Sverdlov, who had assumed the leadership while Lenin was absent in Finland. But it was Leon Trotsky who made most of the plans, which went off without a hitch. During the night of 25–26 October, Bolshevik Red Guards and troops loyal to the Petrograd Soviet took over important buildings, including telegraph offices and the railway station, and surrounded the Winter Palace. Later the provisional government ministers were arrested, except Kerensky, who managed to escape. It was almost a bloodless coup, enabling Lenin to announce that the provisional government had been overthrown.

The Bolsheviks knew exactly what they were aiming for, and were well disciplined and organized, whereas the other revolutionary groups were in disarray. The Mensheviks, for example, thought that the next revolution should not take place until the industrial workers were in a majority in the country. Lenin and Trotsky believed that both revolutions could be combined into one, and so, after years of disagreement, they were able to work well together. However, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries still believed that this revolution should have been delayed until the industrial workers were more numerous. They walked out of the Second Congress of Soviets, leaving Lenin and the Bolsheviks to set up a new Soviet government with himself in charge. It was to be called the Council of People's Commissars, or Sovnarkom for short.

(c) Coup or mass insurrection?

The official Soviet interpretation of these events was that the Bolshevik takeover was the result of a mass movement: workers, peasants and most of the soldiers and sailors were attracted by the revolutionary politics of the Bolsheviks, which included peace, land for the peasants, worker control, government by the soviets and self-determination for the different nationalities in the Russian Empire. Lenin was a charismatic leader who inspired his party and the people. It was important for the Bolsheviks, or Communists, as they

became known later, to emphasize the popular nature of the revolution because that gave the regime its legitimacy.

The traditional liberal interpretation put forward by Western historians rejected the Soviet view. They refused to accept that there was any significant popular support for the Bolsheviks, who were simply a minority group of professional revolutionaries who used the chaos in Russia to take power for themselves. They were successful because they were well organized and ruthless. According to Adam Ulam, 'the Bolsheviks did not seize power in this year of revolutions. They picked it up. … Any group of determined men could have done what the Bolsheviks did in Petrograd in October 1917: seize the few key points of the city and proclaim themselves the government.'

Revisionist interpretations have concentrated on what was happening among ordinary people; their conclusions were wide-ranging. However, they all agree that there was great political awareness among ordinary people, many of whom were involved in trade unions and the soviets. In some places they seem to have been influenced by the Bolsheviks; in Kronstadt, the island naval base off Petrograd, the Bolsheviks were the largest group in the local soviet. In June 1917 it was their influence which caused the Kronstadt soviet to pass a resolution condemning 'this pernicious war' and the Kerensky offensive.

Christopher Read believes that 'the revolution was constantly driven forward by the often spontaneous impulse given to it from the grass roots'. Robert Service (in *Lenin: A Biography*) stresses the role of Lenin; he thinks there can be no doubt that Lenin wanted power and used the potentially revolutionary situation brilliantly. 'His every pronouncement was directed towards encouraging the "masses" to exercise initiative. His wish was for the Bolsheviks to appear as a party that would facilitate the making of Revolution by and for the people.' So in fact the Bolsheviks did have popular backing, even though it was fairly passive, for their October *coup*, because the popular movement thought it was going to get government by the soviets. Although the circumstances were right and there was hardly any resistance to the Bolsheviks, it still needed that small group of people with the nerve and the resolve to use the situation. Lenin judged to perfection the point of maximum unpopularity of the provisional government, and then actually 'made' the revolution happen.

(d) Lenin and the Bolsheviks consolidate their control

The Bolsheviks were in control in Petrograd as a result of their coup, but in some places the takeover was not so smooth. Fighting lasted a week in Moscow before the soviet won control, and it was the end of November before other cities were brought to heel. Country areas were more difficult to deal with, and at first the peasants were only lukewarm towards the new government. They preferred the Social Revolutionaries, who also promised them land and who saw the peasants as the backbone of the nation, whereas the Bolsheviks seemed to favour industrial workers. Very few people expected the Bolshevik government to last long because of the complexity of the problems facing it.

15.2 HOW SUCCESSFULLY DID LENIN AND THE BOLSHEVIKS DEAL WITH THEIR PROBLEMS (1917–24)?

(a) Lack of majority support

The Bolsheviks had nothing like majority support in the country as a whole. One problem therefore was how to keep themselves in power and yet allow free elections. One of Lenin's first decrees nationalized all land, including former crown estates and land

belonging to the church, without compensation, so that it could be redistributed among the peasants and, so he hoped, win their support. The decree on workers' control gave industrial workers authority over their managers and was intended to reduce unrest and strikes in factories. Another decree limited the working day in factories to eight hours. Other decrees included granting self-determination to every national group, nationalizing banks, large factories and mines, and cancelling all debts incurred by the tsarist government and the Provisional government. At the same time they took steps to deal with any opposition. The government claimed the right to close down hostile newspapers and journals, and set up a new security police force, the Extraordinary Commission for Combating Sabotage and Counter-Revolution (Cheka) led by Felix Dzierzynski.

Lenin knew that he would have to allow elections, since he had criticized Kerensky so bitterly for postponing them; but he sensed that a Bolshevik majority in the Constituent Assembly was highly unlikely. Kerensky had arranged elections for mid-November, and they went ahead as planned. Lenin's worst fears were realized: the Bolsheviks won 175 seats out of about 700, but the Social Revolutionaries (SRs) won 370; the Mensheviks won only 15, Left Social Revolutionaries 40, various nationality groups 80 and Kadets (Constitutional Democrats who wanted genuine democracy) 17.

After some anti-Bolshevik speeches at the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly (January 1918), it was dispersed by Bolshevik Red Guards and not allowed to meet again. Lenin's justification for this undemocratic action was that it was really the highest form of democracy: since the Bolsheviks knew what the workers wanted, they had no need of an elected parliament to tell them. The Assembly must take second place to the Congress of Soviets and Sovnarkom (the Council of People's Commissars); this was a sort of cabinet which had Lenin as its chairman. Armed force had triumphed for the time being, but opposition was to lead to civil war later in the year.

(b) War with Germany

The next pressing problem was how to withdraw from the war. An armistice between Russia and the Central Powers had been agreed in December 1917, but long negotiations followed during which Trotsky tried, without success, to persuade the Germans to moderate their demands. *The Treaty of Brest–Litovsk (March 1918)* was punitive: Russia lost Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Ukraine, Georgia and Finland; this included a third of Russia's farming land, a third of her population, two-thirds of her coalmines and half her heavy industry. This was a high price to pay, and all the other parties condemned it; the Left Socialist Revolutionaries walked out of Sovnarkom. However, Lenin insisted that it was worth it, pointing out that Russia needed to sacrifice space in order to gain time to recover.

(c) The drift towards violence

Almost immediately after the October revolution, the Bolsheviks began to resort to coercion in order to get things done and to stay in power. This raises the question, much debated by historians, of *whether Lenin had violent intentions from the beginning*, *or whether he was pushed into these policies against his will by the difficult circumstances*. *Soviet and Marxist historians played down the violence* and claimed that the Bolsheviks had no choice, given the uncompromising attitude of their enemies. After the signing of the Treaty of Brest–Litovsk, the SRs left Petrograd and moved eastwards to Samara on the Volga. They set up an alternative government which launched a campaign of assassination and terror, before the civil war started.

Map 15.1 **Russian Losses by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**

The members of the provisional government who had been arrested were almost all released after promising 'not to take up arms against the people any more'.

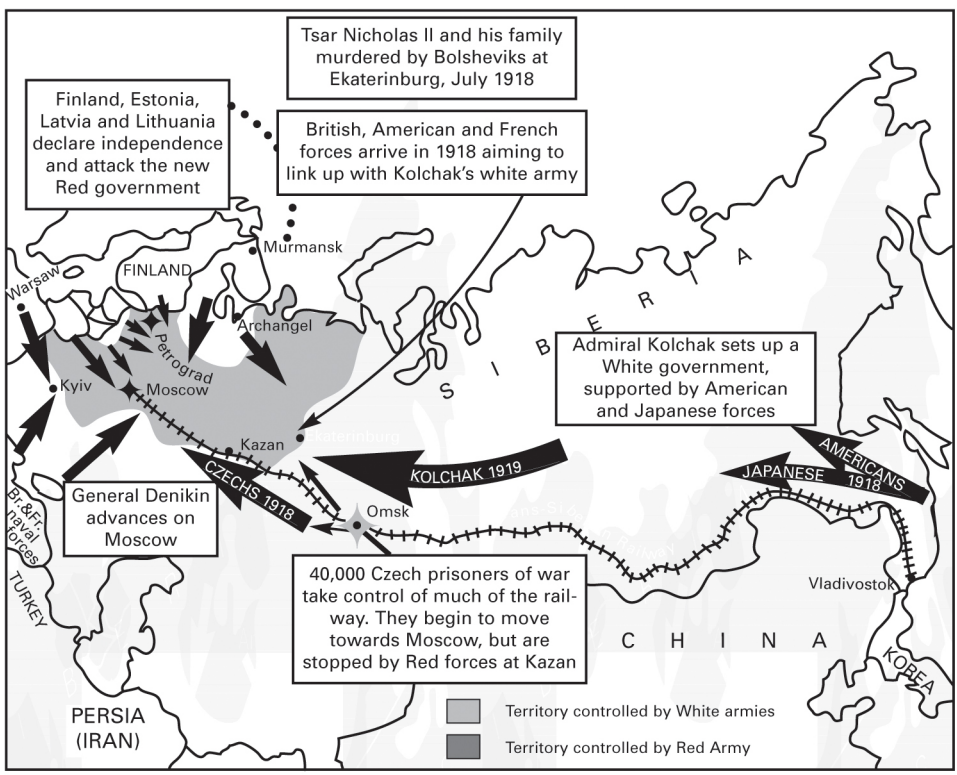
By January 1918 there were severe food shortages in Petrograd and Moscow and some other cities. Lenin was convinced that the better-off peasants (*kulaks*) were hoarding huge quantities of grain in protest against the low payments that they were receiving. The Cheka were given the job of dealing with grain hoarders and speculators. 'There will be no famine in Russia', Lenin said in April 1918, 'if stocks are controlled and any breach of the rules is followed by the harshest punishment – the arrest and shooting of takers of bribes and swindlers.'

- After the signing of the humiliating Treaty of Brest–Litovsk (March 1918), *the loss of Ukraine*, *a vitally important source of wheat*, *made the food situation worse*.
- *The left-wing Social Revolutionaries did their best to wreck the treaty*, *and began a campaign of terror*. They assassinated the German ambassador and a leading Bolshevik member of the Petrograd soviet, and there was some evidence that they were attempting either to seize power for themselves or to spark off a popular uprising to force the Bolsheviks to change their policies.

- On 30 August 1918, the head of the Petrograd Cheka was assassinated, and later the same day a woman shot Lenin twice with a revolver at point-blank range. He was wounded in the neck and one of his lungs, but seemed to make a quick recovery.

(d) The 'Red Terror'

Whatever the intentions of the Bolsheviks, there is no doubt that violence and terror became widespread. The Red Army was used to enforce the procurement of grain from peasants who were thought to have surpluses. During 1918 the *Cheka* suppressed 245 peasant uprisings and 99 in the first seven months of 1919. Official *Cheka* figures show that during the course of these operations over 3,000 peasants were killed and 6,300 executed; in 1919 there were over 3,000 more executions, but the actual death toll was probably much higher. One infamous incident of the terror was the murder of the ex-Tsar Nicholas and his family. In the summer of 1918 they were being kept under guard in a house in Ekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains. By that time the civil war was in full swing; the Bolsheviks were afraid that White forces, which were advancing towards Ekaterinburg, might rescue the royal family, who would then become a focus for all the anti-Bolshevik forces. Lenin himself gave the order for them to be killed, and in July 1918 the entire family, together with members of their household, were shot by members of the local *Cheka*. Their graves were only discovered after the collapse of the Soviet Empire. In 1992 some of the bones were subjected to DNA analysis, which proved that they were indeed the remains of the Romanovs.


Tsar Nicholas II and his family murdered by Bolsheviks at Ekaterinburg, July 1918
Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania declare independence and attack the new Red government
British, American and French forces arrive in 1918 aiming to link up with Kolchak's white army
Murmansk
FINLAND
Warsaw
Archangel
Petrograd
Moscow
Kyiv
Admiral Kolchak sets up a White government, supported by American and Japanese forces
Kazan
KOLCHAK 1919
CZECHS 1918
AMERICANS 1918
JAPANESE
General Denikin advances on Moscow
Br.&Fr. naval forces
Omsk
TURKEY
40,000 Czech prisoners of war take control of much of the railway. They begin to move towards Moscow, but are stopped by Red forces at Kazan
Vladivostok
C H I N A
KOREA
PERSIA (IRAN)
Territory controlled by White armies
Territory controlled by Red Army

Map 15.2 **Civil War and the Interventions in Russia, 1918–22**

(e) Civil war

By April 1918, armed opposition to the Bolsheviks was breaking out in many areas leading to civil war. The opposition (known as the Whites) consisted of Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, ex-tsarist officers and any other groups which did not like what they had seen of the Bolsheviks. There was great discontent in the countryside, where peasants hated the food-procurement policies of the government; even the soldiers and workers, who had supported the Bolsheviks in 1917, resented the high-handed way in which the Bolsheviks treated the soviets (elected councils) all over Russia. One of the Bolshevik slogans had been 'ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS'. Naturally, people had expected that every town would have its own soviet, which would run the town's affairs and local industry. Instead, officials (known as commissars) appointed by the government arrived, supported by Red Guards; they threw Social Revolutionary and Menshevik members out of the soviets, leaving Bolshevik members in control. It soon turned into dictatorship from the centre instead of local control. The slogan of the government's opponents became 'LONG LIVE THE SOVIETS AND DOWN WITH THE COMMISSARS'. Their general aim was not to restore the Tsar, but simply to set up a democratic government on Western lines.

In Siberia, Admiral Kolchak, former Black Sea Fleet commander, set up a White government; General Denikin was in the Caucasus with a large White army. Most bizarre of all, the Czechoslovak Legion of about 40,000 men had seized long stretches of the Trans-Siberian Railway in the region of Omsk. These troops were originally prisoners taken by the Russians from the Austro-Hungarian army, who had then changed sides after the March revolution and fought for the Kerensky government against the Germans.

The situation was complicated by the fact that Russia's allies in the First World War intervened to help the whites. They claimed that they wanted a government which would continue the war against Germany. When their intervention continued even after the defeat of Germany, it became clear that their aim was to destroy the Bolshevik government, which was now advocating world revolution. The United States, Japan, France and Britain sent troops, who landed at Murmansk, Archangel and Vladivostok. The situation seemed grim for the Bolsheviks when, early in 1919, Kolchak (whom the Allies intended to place at the head of the next government) advanced towards Moscow, the new capital. However, Trotsky, now Commissar for War, had done a magnificent job creating the well-disciplined Red Army, based on conscription and including thousands of experienced officers from the old tsarist armies. Kolchak was forced back and later captured and executed by the Reds. The Czech Legion was defeated, and Denikin, advancing from the south to within 250 miles of Moscow, was forced to retreat; he later escaped with British help.

By the end of 1919 it was clear that the Bolsheviks (now calling themselves communists) would survive. As the White armies began to suffer defeats, the interventionist states lost interest and withdrew their troops. In 1920 there was an invasion of Ukraine by Polish and French troops, which forced the Russians to hand over part of Ukraine and White Russia (the Treaty of Riga, 1921).

- *The Whites were not centrally organized*. Kolchak and Denikin failed to link up, and the nearer they drew to Moscow, the more they strained their lines of communication. They lost the support of many peasants both by their brutal behaviour, and because peasants feared that a White victory would mean the loss of their newly acquired land.
- *The Red Armies had more troops*. After the introduction of conscription, they had almost 3 million men in arms, outnumbering the Whites by about ten to one. They controlled most of the modern industry and so were better supplied with armaments, and had the inspired leadership of Trotsky.

- Lenin took decisive measures, known as *war communism*, to control the economic resources of the state. All factories of any size were nationalized, all private trade banned, and food and grain were seized from peasants to feed town workers and troops. This was successful at first since it enabled the government to survive the civil war, but it had disastrous results later.
- Lenin was able to present the Bolsheviks *as a nationalist government fighting against foreigners*; and even though war communism was unpopular with the peasants, the whites became even more unpopular because of their foreign connections.

(f) Effects of the civil war

The war was a terrible tragedy for the Russian people – *there was an enormous cost in human lives and suffering*. Taking into account those killed in the Red Terror, in the military action, and in the White anti-Jewish pogroms; those who died from starvation and those who perished from dysentery and in the typhus and typhoid epidemics, the total number of deaths was at least 8 million – more than four times the number of Russian deaths in the First World War. At the end of the war *important changes had taken place in the communist regime*. Economically it became more centralized, as state control was extended over all areas of the economy. Politically, the regime became militarized and even brutalized. Robert C. Tucker argues that the civil war *was* responsible for the political developments. He believes that it brutalized the Party and gave its members a siege mentality which they found it difficult to break away from. Tucker also points out that already, at the height of the civil war, there were signs of Lenin's more 'liberal' thinking, which he was able to put into practice during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP). For example, in May 1919 Lenin wrote a pamphlet in which he explained that the main obstacle to the achievement of socialism in Russia was the culture of backwardness left over from centuries of tsarist rule. According to Lenin, the best way to change this was not by forcible means, but by education, which unfortunately would take a long time.

Other historians argue that the civil war was one of the influences which brutalized the communist regime, but that it was not the only one. Christopher Read makes the point that the Bolsheviks were products of the tsarist environment, which had itself been extremely authoritarian; tsarist governments had never hesitated to use extreme methods against their enemies. It was only a few years since Stolypin had executed around 4,000 opponents. 'In the prevailing circumstances', argues Read, 'it is hard to see why opposition should be tolerated when the Russian tradition was to eradicate it as heresy.' Among the older generation of liberal historians, Adam Ulam argued that violence and terror were an integral part of communism, and claimed that Lenin actually welcomed the civil war because it gave him an excuse to use more violence. Some Soviet historians believe that the Party had a basic plan for nationalizing the major industries as soon as possible: hence the nationalization of banks, railways, shipping and hundreds of large factories by June 1918. Others believe that what Lenin really hoped for was a mixed economy in which some capitalist activity would be allowed.

(g) Lenin's economic policy

From early 1921 Lenin faced the formidable task of rebuilding an economy shattered by the First World War and then by civil war. War communism had been unpopular with the peasants, who, seeing no point in working hard to produce food which was taken away from them without compensation, simply produced enough for their own needs. This

caused severe food shortages aggravated by droughts in 1920–1. In addition, industry was almost at a standstill. In March 1921 a serious naval mutiny occurred at Kronstadt, the island naval base just off St Petersburg. This was suppressed only through prompt action by Trotsky, who sent troops across the ice on the frozen sea.

The mutiny seems to have convinced Lenin that a new approach was needed, to win back the faltering support of the peasants; this was vitally important since peasants formed a large majority of the population. He put into operation what became known as *the New Economic Policy (NEP)*. Peasants were now allowed to keep surplus produce after payment of a tax representing a certain proportion of the surplus. This, plus the reintroduction of private trade, revived incentive and food production increased. Small industries and trade in their products were also restored to private ownership, though heavy industry such as coal, iron and steel, together with power, transport and banking, remained under state control.

There is the usual debate among historians about Lenin's motives and intentions. Some Bolsheviks claimed that the Kronstadt mutiny and peasant unrest had no bearing on the decision to change to NEP; that in fact they had been on the point of introducing an earlier version of NEP when the outbreak of the civil war prevented them. To confuse matters further, some of the other communist leaders, especially Kamenev and Zinoviev, disapproved of NEP because they thought it encouraged the development of *kulaks* (wealthy peasants), who would turn out to be the enemies of communism. They saw it as a retreat from true socialism.

Did Lenin intend NEP as a temporary compromise – a return to a certain amount of private enterprise until recovery was assured; or did he see it as a return to something like the correct road to socialism, from which they had been diverted by the civil war? It is difficult to be certain one way or the other. What is clear is that Lenin defended NEP vigorously: he said they needed the experience of the capitalists to get the economy blooming again. In May 1921 he told the Party that NEP must be pursued 'seriously and for a long time – not less than a decade and probably more'. They had to take into account the fact that instead of introducing socialism in a country dominated by industrial workers – the true allies of the Bolsheviks – they were working in a backward, peasant-dominated society. Therefore, NEP was not a retreat – it was an attempt to find an alternative road to socialism in less than ideal circumstances. It would require a long campaign of educating the peasants in the benefits of agrarian co-operatives so that force would not be necessary; this would lead to the triumph of socialism.

NEP was moderately successful: the economy began to recover and production levels were improving; in most commodities they were not far off the 1913 levels. Given the territorial losses at the end of the First World War and the war with Poland, this was a considerable achievement. Great progress was made with the electrification of industry, one of Lenin's pet schemes. Towards the end of 1927, when NEP began to be abandoned, the ordinary Russian was probably better off than at any time since 1914. Industrial workers who had a job were being paid real wages and they had the benefits of NEP's new social legislation: an eight-hour working day, two weeks' holiday with pay, sick and unemployment pay and healthcare.

(h) Political problems were solved decisively

In March 1921 Lenin banned 'factionalism' within the Party. This meant that discussion would be allowed, but once a decision had been taken, all sections of the Party had to stick to it. Anybody who persisted in holding a view different from the official party line would be expelled from the Party. During the rest of 1921 about one-third of the Party's members were 'purged' (expelled) with the help of the ruthless Cheka; many more resigned, mainly

because they were against NEP. Lenin also rejected the claim of the trade unions that they should run industry. Trade unions had to do as the government told them, and their main function was to increase production.

The governing body in the Party was known as the 'Politburo'. During the civil war, when quick decisions were required, the Politburo got into the habit of acting as the government, and they continued to do so when the war was over. Control by Lenin and the Communist Party was now complete However, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was nowhere in evidence; nor was there any prospect of the state 'withering away'. Lenin defended this situation on the grounds that the working class were exhausted and weak; this meant that the most advanced workers and their leaders – the Communist Party – must rule the country for them. In May 1922 Lenin suffered a stroke; after this he gradually grew weaker, and was forced to take less part in the work of government. He later suffered two more strokes, and died in January 1924 at the early age of fifty-three. Although his health had been failing for some time, Lenin had made no clear plans about how the government was to be organized after his death, and this meant that a power struggle was inevitable.

15.3 LENIN – EVIL GENIUS?

Some historians admire him: A. J. P. Taylor claimed that 'Lenin did more than any other political figure to change the face of the twentieth-century world. The creation of Soviet Russia and its survival were due to him. He was a very great man and even, despite his faults, a very good man.' Some revisionist historians also took a sympathetic view. Moshe Lewin, writing in 1968, portrayed Lenin as having been forced unwillingly into policies of violence and terror, and in his last years, in the face of ill health and the evil ambitions of Stalin, struggling unsuccessfully to steer communism into a more peaceful and civilized phase. Alexander Potresov, a Menshevik who knew Lenin well, described him as an 'evil genius' who had a hypnotic effect on people that enabled him to dominate them. Richard Pipes emphasizes Lenin's cruelty and his apparent lack of remorse at the great loss of life which he had caused.

Leninism and Stalinism

Was Stalinism merely a continuation of Leninism, or did Stalin betray Lenin's vision of a society free from injustice and exploitation? During the early years of the Cold War, Western historians claimed that Stalin simply continued Lenin's work. It was Lenin who destroyed the multi-party system when he suppressed the Constituent Assembly. He created the highly authoritarian structures of the Bolshevik Party, which became the structures of government, and which Stalin was able to make full use of in his collectivization policies and his purges. It was Lenin who founded the *Cheka*, which became the dreaded KGB under Stalin, and it was Lenin who destroyed most of the powers of the trade unions.

Moshe Lewin, Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen argue that there was a fundamental discontinuity between Lenin and Stalin – things changed radically under Stalin. Stephen Cohen points out that Stalin's treatment of the peasants was quite different from Lenin's merely coercive policies: Stalin waged a virtual civil war against the peasantry, 'a holocaust by terror that victimized tens of millions of people for 25 years'. Lenin was against the cult of the individual leader, whereas Stalin began his own personality cult. Lenin wanted to keep the Party bureaucracy as small and manageable as possible, but Stalin enlarged it.

15.4 THE USSR AND STALIN, 1924–53

How did Stalin achieve supreme power?

Joseph Djugashvili (he took the name 'Stalin' – man of steel – soon after joining the Bolsheviks in 1904) was born in 1879 in the small town of Gori in the province of Georgia. His parents were poor peasants; his father, a shoemaker, had been born a serf. After 1917, thanks to his outstanding ability as an administrator, he was quietly able to build up his own position under Lenin. When Lenin died in 1924, Stalin was Secretary-General of the Communist Party and a member of the seven-man Politburo, the committee which decided government policy. At first it seemed unlikely that Stalin would become the dominant figure; Trotsky called him 'the party's most eminent mediocrity … a man destined to play second or third fiddle'. The Menshevik Nikolai Sukhanov described him as 'nothing more than a vague, grey blur'. Lenin thought him stubborn and rude, and suggested in his will that Stalin should be removed from his post. The most obvious successor to Lenin was Leon Trotsky, an inspired orator, an intellectual and the organizer of the Red Armies.

(a) Trotsky's brilliance worked against him

It aroused envy and resentment among the other Politburo members. He was arrogant and condescending, and many resented the fact that he had only joined the Bolsheviks shortly before the November revolution. During Lenin's illness, he was bitterly critical of Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin, who were acting as a triumvirate, accusing them of having no plan for the future and no vision. The others therefore decided to run the country jointly: collective action was better than a one-man show. They worked together, doing all they could to prevent Trotsky from becoming leader. By the end of 1924 almost all his support had disappeared.

(b) The other Politburo members underestimated Stalin

They saw him as nothing more than a competent administrator; they ignored Lenin's advice about removing him. They were so busy attacking Trotsky that they failed to recognize the very real danger from Stalin and they missed several chances to get rid of him. In fact Stalin had great political skill and intuition; he had the ability to cut through the complexities of a problem and focus on the essentials; and he was an excellent judge of character, sensing people's weaknesses and exploiting them.

(c) Stalin used his position cleverly

As Secretary-General of the Party, a position he had held since April 1922, Stalin had full powers of appointment and promotion to important jobs such as secretaries of local Communist Party organizations. He quietly filled these positions with his own supporters, while at the same time removing the supporters of others to distant parts of the country. By 1928 all the top bodies and congresses were packed with Stalinites, and he was unassailable.

(d) Stalin used the disagreements to his own advantage

Stalin claimed that when all opposition had been crushed, the ultimate goal of a classless society would be achieved, in which, according to Marx, the ruling principle would

be: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'. With the New Economic Policy Lenin had departed from socialist principles, though whether he intended this as a temporary measure until the crisis passed is still open to debate. Now the right wing of the Party, led by Bukharin, and the left, whose views were most strongly put by Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev, fell out about what to do next:

- Bukharin thought it important to consolidate Soviet power in Russia, based on a prosperous peasantry and with a very gradual industrialization; this policy became known as *'socialism in one country'*.
- *Bukharin wanted to continue NEP*, even though it was causing an increase in the numbers of wealthy peasants, *kulaks* Bukharin's opponents, who now included Kamenev and Zinoviev, wanted to abandon NEP and concentrate on rapid industrialization at the expense of the peasants.

Stalin, quietly ambitious, seemed to have no strong views either way at first, but on the question of 'socialism in one country' he came out in support of Bukharin, so that Trotsky was completely isolated. Later, when the split occurred between Bukharin on the one hand, and Kamenev and Zinoviev, who were feeling unhappy about NEP, on the other, Stalin supported Bukharin. One by one, Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev were voted off the Politburo, replaced by Stalin's yes-men, and expelled from the Party (1927); eventually Trotsky was exiled from the USSR and went to live in Istanbul in Turkey. Stalin and Bukharin were now the joint leaders, but Bukharin did not survive for long. The following year Stalin, who had supported NEP and its great advocate, Bukharin, ever since it was introduced, now decided that NEP must go – he claimed that the *kulaks* were holding up agricultural progress. When Bukharin protested, he too was voted off the Politburo (1929), leaving Stalin supreme.

15.5 HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS STALIN IN SOLVING RUSSIA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS?

(a) What were Russia's economic problems?

- Although Russian industry was recovering from the effects of the First World War, *production from heavy industry was still surprisingly low*. In 1929 for example, France, which did not rank as a leading industrial power, produced more coal and steel than Russia, while Germany, Britain and especially the United States were far ahead. Stalin believed that a rapid expansion of heavy industry was essential to enable Russia to deal with the attack which he was convinced would come sooner or later from the western capitalist powers, who hated communism. Industrialization would have the added advantage of increasing support for the government, because *it was the industrial workers who were the communists' greatest allies*: the more industrial workers there were in relation to peasants (whom Stalin saw as the enemies of socialism), the more secure the communist state would be.
- *More food would have to be produced*, both to feed the growing industrial population and to provide a surplus for export (the only way that the USSR could earn foreign capital and profits for investment in industry). By the beginning of 1928 there were food shortages in the cities and there seemed to be a real danger of famine by the end of the winter unless something drastic was done.

(b) The Five Year Plans for industry

Stalin seems to have had no hesitation in plunging the country into a series of dramatic changes designed to overcome the problems in the shortest possible time. In a speech in 1931 he explained why: 'We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in 10 years. Either we do it or we shall be crushed.' NEP had been permissible as a temporary measure, but must now be abandoned: both industry and agriculture must be taken firmly under government control. Industrial expansion was tackled by a series of *Five Year Plans*, the first two of which (1928–32 and 1933–7) were said to have been completed a year ahead of schedule, although in fact neither of them reached the full target. The third Plan (1938–42) was cut short by the USSR's involvement in the Second World War. The first Plan concentrated on heavy industries – coal, iron, steel, oil and machinery (including tractors), which were scheduled to triple output. The two later Plans provided for some increases in consumer goods as well as in heavy industry. By 1940 the USSR had overtaken Britain in iron and steel production, though not yet in coal, and was within reach of Germany. Hundreds of factories were built, many of them in new towns east of the Ural Mountains where they would be safer from invasion. Well-known examples are the iron and steel works at Magnitogorsk, tractor works at Kharkov and Gorki, a hydro-electric dam at Dnepropetrovsk and the oil refineries in the Caucasus. This proved to be an inspired decision: on 22 June 1941 the Germans invaded Russia and soon overran the western parts of the USSR. Without the new industry, the war would have been quickly lost.

1 How was all this achieved?

The cash was provided almost entirely by the Russians themselves, with no foreign investment. Some came from grain exports, some from charging peasants heavily for the use of government equipment, and the ruthless ploughing-back of all profits and surpluses. Hundreds of foreign technicians were brought in and great emphasis was placed on expanding education in colleges and universities, and even in factory schools, to provide a whole new generation of skilled workers. Medals were given to workers who achieved record output; these were known as *Stakhanovites*, after Alexei Stakhanov, a champion miner who, in August 1935, supported by a well-organized team, managed to cut 102 tons of coal in a single shift.

However, ordinary workers were ruthlessly disciplined: there were severe punishments for bad workmanship, people were accused of being 'saboteurs' or 'wreckers' when targets were not met, and given spells in forced labour camps. Primitive housing conditions and a severe shortage of consumer goods (because of the concentration on heavy industry), on top of all the regimentation, must have made life grim for most workers. As Richard Freeborn pointed out: 'It is probably no exaggeration to claim that the First Five Year Plan represented a declaration of war by the state machine against the workers and peasants of the USSR who were subjected to a greater exploitation than any they

Table 15.1 **Industrial expansion in the USSR: Production in millions of tons**

	1900	*1913*	*1929*	*1938*	*1940*
Coal	16.0	36.0	40.1	132.9	164.9
Pig-iron	2.7	4.8	8.0	26.3	14.9
Steel	2.5	5.2	4.9	18.0	18.4

Table 15.2 **Industrial production in the USSR compared with other great powers, 1940**

	Pig-iron	*Steel*	*Coal*	*Electricity* (in billion kilowatts)
USSR	14.9	18.4	164.6	39.6
USA	31.9	47.2	395.0	115.9
Britain	6.7	10.3	227.0	30.7
Germany	18.3	22.7	186.0	55.2
France	6.0	16.1	45.5	19.3

had known under capitalism.' However, by the mid-1930s things were improving as benefits such as medical care, education and holidays with pay became available. Martin McCauley believes that 'the First Five-Year Plan was a period of genuine enthusiasm, and prodigious achievements were recorded in production. The impossible targets galvanized people into action, and more was achieved than would have been the case had orthodox advice been followed.'

(c) The collectivization of agriculture

The problems of agriculture were dealt with by the process known as 'collectivization'. The idea was that small farms and holdings belonging to the peasants should be merged to form large collective farms (*kolkhoz*) jointly owned by the peasants. There were two main reasons for Stalin's decision to collectivize.

- The existing system of small farms was inefficient, and seemed unable to satisfy the increasing demand for food, especially in the growing industrial cities. However, large farms, under state direction, and using tractors and combine harvesters, would vastly increase grain production, or so the theory went.
- He wanted to eliminate the class of prosperous peasants (*kulaks*), which NEP had encouraged, because, he claimed, they were standing in the way of progress. The real reason was probably political: Stalin saw the *kulaks* as the enemy of communism. 'We must smash the *kulaks* so hard that they will never rise to their feet again.'

The policy was launched in earnest in 1929, and had to be carried through by sheer brute force, so determined was the resistance in the countryside. It proved to be a disaster, and it took Russia at least half a century to recover. There was no problem in collectivizing landless labourers, but all peasants who owned any property at all, whether they were *kulaks* or not, were hostile to the plan, and had to be forced to join by armies of party members, who urged poorer peasants to seize cattle and machinery from the *kulaks* to be handed over to the collectives. *Kulaks* often reacted by slaughtering cattle and burning crops rather than allow the state to take them. Peasants who refused to join collective farms were arrested and taken to labour camps, or shot. Well over 90 per cent of all farmland had been collectivized by 1937.

In one sense Stalin could claim that collectivization was a success: it allowed greater mechanization, which did achieve a substantial increase in production in 1937. The amount of grain taken by the state increased impressively and so did grain exports: 1930 and 1931 were excellent years for exports, and although the amounts

fell sharply after that, they were still far higher than before collectivization. On the other hand, so many animals had been slaughtered that it was 1953 before livestock production recovered to the 1928 figure, and the cost in human life and suffering was enormous.

The truth was that total grain production did not increase at all (except for 1930) – in fact it was less in 1934 than it had been in 1928. *The reasons for this failure were*:

- The best producers – the *kulaks* – were excluded from the collective farms. Most of the party activists who came from the cities to organize collectivization did not know much about agriculture.
- Many peasants were demoralized after the seizure of their land and property; some of them left the *kolkhoz* to look for jobs in the cities. With all the arrests and deportations, this meant that there were far fewer peasants to work the land.
- The government did not at first provide sufficient tractors; since many peasants had slaughtered their horses rather than hand them over to the *kolkhoz*, there were serious problems in trying to get the ploughing done in time.
- Peasants were still allowed to keep a small private plot of their own; they tended to work harder on their own plots and do the minimum they could get away with on the *kolkhoz*.

A combination of all these factors led to famine, mainly in the countryside, during 1932–3, especially in Ukraine. Yet 1.75 million tons of grain were exported during that same period while over 5 million peasants died of starvation. Some historians have even claimed that Stalin welcomed the famine, since, along with the 10 million *kulaks* who were removed or executed, it helped to break peasant resistance.

Table 15.3 **Grain and livestock statistics in the USSR**

Actual grain harvest (in million tons)

1913	*1928*	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*	*1933*	*1934*	*1936*	*1937*
80.1	73.3	71.7	83.5	69.5	69.6	68.4	67.6	56.1	97.4

Grain taken by the state (in million tons)

1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*	*1933*
10.8	16.1	22.1	22.8	18.5	22.6

Grain exported (in million tons)

1927–8	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*	*1933*
0.029	0.18	4.76	5.06	1.73	1.69

Livestock in the USSR (in millions)

	1928	*1929*	*1930*	*1931*	*1932*	*1933*	*1934*	*1935*
Cattle	70.5	67.1	52.5	47.9	40.7	38.4	42.2	49.3
Pigs	26.0	20.4	13.6	14.4	11.6	12.1	17.4	22.6
Sheep & goats	146.7	147.0	108.8	77.7	52.1	50.2	51.9	61.1

15.6 POLITICS AND THE PURGES

(a) Political problems

During the 1930s Stalin tightened his grip on the Party until by 1938 all criticism and disagreement had been driven underground. Although his personal dictatorship was complete, Stalin did not feel secure; he became increasingly suspicious, trusted nobody and seemed to see plots everywhere. The main political issues during these years were:

- By the summer of 1930, the government's popularity with the general public had fallen sharply because of collectivization and the hardships of the First Five Year Plan. There was growing opposition to Stalin in the Party; a document known as the 'Ryutin Platform' (after one of the Moscow party leaders) was circulated, advocating a slowdown in industrialization, more gentle treatment of the peasants and the removal of Stalin.
- A new constitution was needed to consolidate the hold of Stalin and the Communist Party over the whole country.
- Some of the non-Russian parts of the country wanted to become independent, but Stalin, although he was non-Russian himself (he was born in Georgia), had no sympathy with nationalist ambitions and was determined to hold the union together.

(b) The purges and the great terror, 1934–8

The first priority for Stalin was to deal with the opposition. During the early part of 1933 more party members began to call for the break-up of collective farms, the return of powers to the trade unions and the removal of Stalin. But Stalin and his allies in the Politburo voted for a purge of dissident party members. By the end of 1933, over 800,000 had been expelled, and a further 340,000 were expelled in 1934. There were over 2 million people in prisons and forced labour camps. As yet, however, nobody was executed for opposing Stalin; Sergei Kirov (the Leningrad party boss and ally of Stalin) and Sergo Ordzhonikidze (Stalin's fellow-Georgian and staunch ally) both voted against the death penalty.

In December 1934 Kirov was shot dead by Leonid Nikolaev, a young Communist Party member. Stalin announced that a wide-ranging plot had been uncovered to assassinate himself and Molotov (the prime minister) as well. The murder was used as the pretext for launching further purges against anybody that Stalin distrusted. It seems likely that Stalin himself organized Kirov's murder, perhaps because he suspected him of plotting to take over the leadership himself. Historian Robert Conquest calls the murder 'the crime of the century, the keystone of the entire edifice of terror and suffering by which Stalin secured his grip on the soviet peoples'. From 1936 until 1938 this campaign intensified to such an extent that it became known as 'the Great Terror'. The number of victims is still in dispute, but even the more modest estimates put the total executed and sent to labour camps at well over 3 million in the years 1937–8 alone.

Hundreds of important officials were arrested, tortured, made to confess to all sorts of crimes, of which they were largely innocent (such as plotting with the exiled Trotsky or with capitalist governments to overthrow the Soviet state), and forced to appear in a series of 'show trials' at which they were invariably found guilty and sentenced to death or labour camp. Those executed included M. N. Ryutin (author of the Ryutin Platform); all the 'Old Bolsheviks' – Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin – who had helped to make the 1917 revolution; the commander-in-chief of the Red Army, Tukhachevsky; thirteen other

generals and about two-thirds of the army's top officers. Even Trotsky was sought out and murdered in exile in Mexico City (1940).

What were Stalin's motives for such an extraordinary policy? The traditional view is that Stalin was driven by his immense lust for power; once he had achieved supreme power he would stop at nothing to hold on to it. Robert Conquest suggested that Stalin's Terror has to be looked at as a mass phenomenon rather than in terms of individuals; even Stalin could hardly have had personal grudges against several million people; nor could they all have been plotting against him. Stalin's motive was to frighten the great mass of the population into uncomplaining obedience by deliberately arresting and shooting a given proportion of that society, whether they were guilty of any crime or not.

Revisionist historians have tried to shift the blame to some extent away from Stalin. J. Arch Getty argues that the Purges were a form of political infighting at the top. He plays down the role of Stalin and claims that it was the obsessive fears of all the leaders which generated the Terror. Sheila Fitzpatrick suggests that the Purges must be seen in the context of continuing revolution; the circumstances were abnormal – all revolutions are faced by constant conspiracies designed to destroy them, so abnormal responses can be expected.

But the consequences of the Purges and the Terror were serious.

- Historians are still arguing about how many people fell victim to the Purges. But whichever statistics you accept, the cost in human lives and suffering is almost beyond belief. Robert Conquest gave relatively high figures: just for the years 1937–8 he estimated about 7 million arrests, about a million executions and about 2 million deaths in the labour camps. He also estimated that of those in the camps, no more than 10 per cent survived.
- Many of the best brains in the government and in industry had disappeared. In a country where numbers of highly educated people were still relatively small, this was bound to hinder progress.
- The purge of the army disrupted the USSR's defence policies at a time of great international tension, and contributed to the disasters of 1941–2 during the Second World War.

(c) The new constitution of 1936

In 1936, after much discussion, a new and apparently more democratic constitution was introduced. It described the USSR as 'a socialist state of workers and peasants' resulting from 'the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists'. It stated that everyone, including 'former people' (ex-nobles, *kulaks*, priests and White Army officers), was allowed to vote by secret ballot to choose members of a national assembly known as *the Supreme Soviet*. However, this met for only about two weeks in the year, when it elected a smaller body, *the Praesidium*, to act on its behalf.

(d) Holding the union together

In 1914, before the First World War, the tsarist empire included many non-Russian areas – Poland, Finland, the Ukraine, Belorussia (White Russia), Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Poland and the three Baltic republics were given

independence by the Treaty of Brest–Litovsk (March 1918). Many of the others wanted independence too, and at first the new Bolshevik government was sympathetic to these different nationalities. Lenin gave Finland independence in November 1917.

The problem for the communist government was that 47 per cent of the population of the USSR was non-Russian, and it would be difficult to hold them all together if they were bitterly resentful of rule from Moscow. Stalin adopted a two-handed approach, which worked successfully until Gorbachev came to power in 1985:

- On the one hand, national cultures and languages were encouraged and the republics had a certain amount of independence; this was much more liberal than under the tsarist regime, which had tried to 'Russianize' the empire;
- On the other hand, it had to be clearly understood that Moscow had the final say in all important decisions.

15.7 EVERYDAY LIFE AND CULTURE UNDER STALIN

However much they might try, ordinary people in the USSR could not avoid contact with the state – being educated, finding a job, getting promotion, marrying and bringing up children, finding somewhere to live, shopping, travelling, sport, reading literature, going to the theatre and concerts, enjoying the visual arts, practising their religion, reading the news, listening to the radio – in all these activities people came up against the state. This was because the communists had a mission: to eradicate 'backwardness'. The Soviet state must become modernized and socialist, and the new Soviet citizen must be educated and 'cultured'.

(a) The state, women and the family

The 1930s were a difficult time for many families because of the 'disappearance' of so many men during collectivization, the famine and the Purges. There was a high desertion and divorce rate, and millions of women were left as the sole breadwinner in the family. During the rapid industrialization of the 1930s more than 10 million women became wage earners for the first time; the percentage of women at work rose from 24 per cent to 39 per cent of the total paid workforce. The government faced the dilemma that it needed women to provide much of the workforce for the industrialization drive, while at the same time it wanted to encourage and strengthen the family unit. One way of coping was to build more day-care centres and nurseries for children – the number of places doubled in the two years 1929–30. In the mid-1930s new laws were passed encouraging women to have as many children as possible.

(b) Education

One of the greatest achievements of the Stalinist regime was the expansion of free, mass education. In 1917 under half the population could be described as literate. In January 1930 the government announced that by the end of the summer, all children aged eight to eleven must be enrolled in schools. Between 1929 and 1931 the number of pupils increased from 14 million to around 20 million; it was in rural areas, where education had been patchy, that most of the increase took place. By 1940 there were 199,000 schools, and even the most remote areas of the USSR were well provided.

(c) Religion

Lenin, Stalin and the other Bolshevik leaders were atheists who accepted Marx's claim that religion was merely an invention of the ruling classes to keep the people docile and under control – the 'opium of the masses'. Lenin had launched a savage attack on the Orthodox Church, seizing all its lands, schools and church buildings, and having hundreds of priests arrested. The situation deteriorated further during Stalin's regime. Many priests courageously opposed collectivization, so Stalin secretly instructed local party organizations to attack churches and priests. Hundreds of churches and cemeteries were vandalized and literally thousands of priests were killed. The slaughter was not confined to Christians: hundreds of Muslim and Jewish leaders also fell victim.

(d) Art

Artists, sculptors and musicians were all expected to play their part in 'socialist realism'. Abstract art was rejected and paintings were expected to portray workers straining every muscle to fulfil their targets, scenes from the revolution or the civil war, or Revolutionary leaders. They were to be photographic in style and finely detailed. Sculptors were limited to producing busts of Lenin and Stalin, and architecture deteriorated into the uninspiring and dull, with grandiose neoclassical façades and featureless tower blocks.

(e) The cinema

Stalin, like Lenin, considered that film was probably the most important form of communication; he loved films and had a private cinema in the Kremlin and one in his *dacha*. He demanded that Soviet films should be 'intelligible to the millions', telling a simple but powerful story. The regime wanted films which were entertaining but full of 'socialist realism'. Film-makers needed to reflect proletarian values, classless Soviet nationalism, the problems of ordinary people, the heroic exploits of the revolutionaries and the glorious communist future.

15.8 STALIN'S FINAL YEARS, 1945–53

(a) The aftermath of the war

The Soviet victory in the Second World War was only achieved by enormous sacrifices of human life, far in excess of the losses of all the other participants put together. There were 6.2 million military personnel dead, 15 million wounded and 4.4 million captured or missing. On top of that there were about 17 million civilian deaths, giving a total Soviet war dead not far short of 25 million.

(b) Stalin's last battles

Any Soviet citizens who were expecting more freedom and a more relaxed way of life as a reward for their superhuman efforts during the war were quickly disillusioned. *Stalin was well aware of the growing unrest and the desire for radical change*. Peasants were disgusted with the tiny wages paid on the collectives and were beginning to take land back and farm it for themselves. Industrial workers were protesting about low wages

and rising food prices. People in the newly acquired areas – the Baltic states and western Ukraine – bitterly resented Soviet rule and resorted to armed resistance. Stalin was utterly ruthless: nationalist risings were crushed and about 300,000 people deported from western Ukraine.

Stalin saw enemies everywhere. Soviet soldiers who had been captured by the Germans were seen as tainted, potential traitors. It seems beyond belief that 2.8 million Red Army soldiers, who had survived appalling treatment in Hitler's prison camps, returned to their homeland only to be arrested by the NKVD. Some were shot, some were sent to the Gulag and only about a third were allowed home. One of Stalin's motives for sending so many people to labour camps was to ensure a constant supply of cheap labour for coalmines and other projects.

The task of rebuilding the country was tackled by the Fourth Five Year Plan (1946–50), which, if the official statistics are to be believed, succeeded in restoring industrial production to its 1940 levels. The outstanding achievement was considered to be the explosion in Kazakhstan, in August 1949, of the first Soviet atomic bomb. However, the great failure of the Plan was in agriculture: the 1946 harvest was less than that of 1945, resulting in famine and starvation.

The final act in the drama was the so-called Doctors' Plot. In November 1952 thirteen Moscow doctors, who had treated Stalin and other leaders at different times, were arrested and accused of conspiring to kill their eminent patients. Six of the doctors were Jewish and this was the signal for an outburst of anti-Semitism. By this time nobody felt safe. There is evidence that Stalin was working up to another major purge of leading figures in the party, with Molotov, Mikoyan and Beria on the list. Fortunately for them, Stalin died of a brain haemorrhage on 5 March 1953.

(c) Assessments of Stalin

When Stalin's death was announced there was widespread and apparently genuine grief; as he lay in state, thousands of people flocked to see his body, which was later embalmed and placed in a glass case next to Lenin. For twenty-five years the public had been brainwashed into regarding him as a kind of god, whose opinion on every subject was correct. However, *his reputation in the USSR soon went into decline* when Khrushchev delivered his sensational speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, denouncing Stalin's excesses.

How does one begin to assess a phenomenon like Stalin, who was responsible for so many dramatic changes but whose methods were so unorthodox and brutal? *Some historians have found positive things to say*. Sheila Fitzpatrick points out that under Stalin the USSR 'was at its most dynamic, engaging in social and economic experiments that some hailed as the future becoming manifest and others saw as a threat to civilization'. Collectivization, the rapid industrialization, the new constitution, the rise of the new bureaucracy, the spread of mass education and social services – all these can be traced directly or indirectly to Stalin.

How did such a brutal leader come to enjoy such popularity? The answer is that he was adept at manipulating public opinion; he never admitted to making a mistake and always shifted the blame on to somebody else. He succeeded in giving the impression that injustices would be put right if only he knew about them. Even some of his critics admit that during the war he did much to keep morale high, and deserves some credit for the Soviet victory.

There is no disguising the fact that the policies at best had only mixed success. Collectivization was a disaster; industrial modernization was a success in heavy industry

Map 15.3 **The Union of the Soviet Republics after 1945, Showing the Fifteen Republics (ex 17.1)**

and armaments and enabled the USSR to win the war. On the other hand, Soviet industry failed to produce enough household goods, and much of what was produced was of poor quality. Living standards and real wages in 1953 were lower for most people than when Stalin took control.

The worst aspect of Stalinism was that it was responsible for about 20 million deaths, over and above the victims of the war. This happened during collectivization, the famine of 1932–3, the Purges and the Great Terror. Stalin always made sure that other members of the Politburo signed death warrants as well as himself. There were huge numbers of people, from those at the top right down to interrogators, torturers, guards and executioners, who were willing to carry out the orders.

(d) Was Stalinism a continuation of Leninism?

Alexander Yakovlev condemns both of them and produces ample evidence of their crimes: Stalin simply carried on from Lenin. However, it is important to compare their policies in more detail. Leninism was a complex mixture of a basic ideology, a particular style of leadership and government and a programme of policies:

- Lenin's ideology and political style were based on the Marxist concept of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. However, Lenin also believed that a tightly disciplined party was needed to guide the proletariat after the successful revolution. Under the supervision of the Party, the people would run their own affairs working through the soviets. This was seen as the highest form of democracy: since the Party and the soviets were mainly made up of members of the proletariat, they would know what was best for the people. Lenin also believed that this could only survive and work in Russia if it was accompanied by revolutions in some of the more advanced countries, such as Germany. Towards the end of his life, however, Lenin suggested that NEP would improve people's lives so much that 'permanent revolution' would not be necessary. This brought him closer to Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country'. Dmitri Volkogonov stresses that both Lenin and Stalin were violent and brutal in their methods, Lenin during the Civil War and Stalin's treatment of the kulaks and the 'Great Terror' of the 1930s.

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Chapter

16 Continuing communism, collapse and aftermath, 1953 to the present

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

This long period falls into four phases:

(a) 1953–64

After Stalin's death, *Nikita Khrushchev* gradually emerged as the dominant leader. He began a de-Stalinization policy and introduced new measures to strengthen the Soviet economy and reform the bureaucracy. In 1962 the USSR came to the brink of war with the USA over the Cuban missiles crisis. Khrushchev's colleagues turned against him and he was forced to retire into private life in October 1964.

(b) 1964–85

This was a period of stagnation and decline, during which *Leonid Brezhnev* was the leading figure.

(c) 1985–91

Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reform and modernize Russian communism and to encourage similar progress in the satellite states of eastern Europe. However, he proved unable to control the rising tide of criticism directed at communism, and in 1989–90, non-communist governments were established in most of the states of eastern Europe. When Gorbachev failed to keep his promises of economic reform and higher living standards, the people of the USSR turned against communism and he lost power to *Boris Yeltsin*. The Communist Party was declared illegal, the USSR broke up into 15 separate states and Gorbachev resigned as president of the USSR (December 1991).

(d) 1991–2012

Boris Yeltsin was president of Russia, which was now a separate state, from 1991 until his resignation at the end of December 1999. After the collapse of communism, Russia was plunged into chaos as successive governments tried desperately to introduce new economic and political systems. The problems were vast: inflation, unemployment, poverty, trouble in Chechnya and clashes between Yeltsin and parliament. In 2000, *Vladimir Putin* became president and was re-elected for a second term in March 2004. The constitution did not

allow a president two terms, so in 2008 Putin's close supporter, Medvedev, was elected president with Putin as prime minister. In the 2012 elections, in spite of declining popularity and allegations of electoral fraud, Putin was elected president for a third term.

16.1 THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA, 1953–64

(a) The rise of Khrushchev, 1953–7

With the departure of Stalin, the situation was similar to that after Lenin's death in 1924: there was no obvious candidate to take charge. Stalin had allowed no one to show any initiative in case he developed into a dangerous rival. The leading members of the Politburo, or Praesidium, as it was now called, decided to share power and rule as a group. Malenkov became chairman of the Council of Ministers, Khrushchev party secretary, and Voroshilov chairman of the Praesidium. Also involved were Beria, the chief of the secret police, Bulganin and Molotov. Gradually Nikita Khrushchev began to emerge as the dominant personality. The son of a peasant farmer, he had worked as a farm labourer and then as a mechanic in a coalmine before going to technical college and joining the Communist Party. Beria, who had an atrocious record of cruelty as chief of police, was executed, probably because the others were nervous in case he turned against them. Malenkov resigned in 1955 after disagreeing with Khrushchev about industrial policies, but it was significant that in the new relaxed atmosphere, he was not executed or imprisoned.

Khrushchev's position was further strengthened by *an amazing speech which he delivered at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress (February 1956) strongly criticizing various aspects of Stalin's policies*. He:

- condemned Stalin for encouraging the cult of his own personality instead of allowing the Party to rule;
- revealed details about Stalin's purges and the wrongful executions of the 1930s, and criticized his conduct of the war;
- claimed that socialism could be achieved in ways other than those insisted on by Stalin;
- suggested that peaceful coexistence with the west was not only possible but essential if nuclear war was to be avoided.

Why did Khrushchev make this attack on Stalin? It was a risky step to take, bearing in mind that he and most of his colleagues owed their positions to Stalin and had gone along with his worst excesses without protest. Khrushchev genuinely believed that the truth about Stalin's crimes would have to come out sooner or later, and that it would be better if the Party took the initiative itself and confronted the issue before it was forced into it by public pressure. This argument enabled him to secure the approval of his colleagues for him to deliver the speech, and then he used the opportunity cleverly for his own political ends. He emphasized that he had only joined the Politburo in 1939, giving the clear impression that his seniors – Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovitch and Voroshilov – were all infinitely more responsible for the bloodletting than he was. His publicly condemning Stalin's behaviour in this way made it more difficult for any future leader to attempt to imitate him. Khrushchev genuinely felt, too, that Stalin's system had held up progress and stifled initiative; he wanted to get things back on the track that Lenin would have followed, and rule as an enlightened dictator.

Khrushchev was not quite supreme yet; Molotov and Malenkov believed his speech was too drastic and would encourage unrest (they blamed him for the Hungarian revolution

of October 1956), and they tried to force him out of office. However, as party secretary, Khrushchev, like Stalin before him, had been quietly filling key positions with his own supporters, and since he could rely on the army, it was Molotov and Malenkov who found themselves compulsorily retired (June 1957). After that, Khrushchev was fully responsible for all Russian policy until 1964. But he never wielded as much power as Stalin; the Central Committee of the Party was ultimately in charge, and it was the Party which voted him out in 1964.

(b) Khrushchev's problems and policies

In spite of Russia's recovery during Stalin's last years, there were a number of serious problems: the low standard of living among industrial and agricultural workers, and the inefficiency of agriculture, which was still a long way from providing all Russia's needs. Khrushchev was fully aware of the problems both at home and abroad and was keen to introduce important changes as part of *a general de-Stalinization policy*.

1 Industrial policy

Industry continued to be organized under the Five Year Plans, with Number Six starting in 1955; for the first time the concentration was more on light industries producing consumer goods (radios, TV sets, washing machines and sewing machines) in an attempt to raise living standards. To reduce over-centralization and encourage efficiency, over a hundred Regional Economic Councils were set up to make decisions about and organize their local industries. Managers were encouraged to make profits instead of just meeting quotas, and wages depended on output.

All this certainly led to an improvement in living standards: a vast housing programme was started in 1958; there were wage increases, a minimum wage, tax cuts on low incomes, a shorter working week, increases in pensions and disability allowances, and the abolition of all tuition fees in secondary and higher education. Between 1955 and 1966 the number of radios per thousand of the population increased from 66 to 171, TV sets from 4 to 82, refrigerators from 4 to 40 and washing machines from 1 to 77. However, this was a long way behind the USA, which in 1966 could boast no fewer than 1300 radios, 376 TV sets, 293 refrigerators, and 259 washing machines per thousand. Of course, much depends on how one measures progress, but it was Khrushchev himself who rashly boasted that the gap between Russia and America would be closed within a few years.

After the initial improvement, economic growth began to slow down, partly because the Regional Councils were inefficient, and partly because insufficient investment took place. This was because of the enormous cost of the armaments programme and the advanced technological and space programmes. The achievement which gained most publicity both at home and abroad was the first manned orbit of the earth by Uri Gagarin (1961).

2 Agricultural policy

One of the most serious problems left behind by Stalin was the inefficient state of agriculture. Collectivization had not achieved the ambitious targets set for it by Stalin; the main priority therefore was somehow to increase food production. Because of his peasant background, Khrushchev considered himself an expert on farming matters. He toured the countryside meeting peasants and talking about their problems, which no previous Russian ruler had ever taken the trouble to do. His special brainchild was *the Virgin Lands Scheme* (started 1954), which involved cultivating for the first time huge areas of land in Siberia and Kazakhstan. The scheme was implemented by tens of thousands of young volunteers, with the government providing over 100 000 new trac-

tors. Khrushchev also aimed to increase yields from the collective farms: peasants were allowed to keep or sell crops grown on their private plots, their taxes were lowered and the government increased its payments for crops from the collectives, thus providing incentives to produce more.

By 1958 there was a dramatic increase in total farm output, which rose by 56 per cent; between 1953 and 1962 grain production rose from 82 million tons to 147 million, and all this helped to improve the standard of living. But then things began to go wrong; the 1963 grain output was down to 110 million tons, mainly because of the failure of the virgin lands scheme. Critics in the Party complained that too much was being spent on agriculture to the detriment of industry; Khrushchev had to give way, and the supply of agricultural equipment dwindled. But the main problem was that much of the land was of poor quality, not enough fertilizers were used, because they were expensive, and the exhausted soil began to blow away in dust storms. In general there was still too much interference in agriculture from local party officials, and it remained the least efficient sector of the economy. The Russians had to rely on grain imports, often from the USA and Australia; this humiliation contributed to Khrushchev's downfall in October 1964.

3 Political, social and cultural changes

There were important changes in all these areas. Khrushchev favoured a more relaxed approach in general and the period became known as the 'thaw'. In politics this included a return to party control instead of Stalin's personality cult. Khrushchev was careful not to act too much like a dictator for fear of laying himself open to similar charges. There was a reduction in secret police activities; after the execution of the sinister Beria, sacked politicians and officials were allowed to retire into obscurity instead of being tortured and shot. The labour camps began to empty and many people were rehabilitated. Unfortunately this was too late for some people: Nadezhda Mandelstam received a letter addressed to her husband Osip, informing him that he had been rehabilitated; sadly, he had died in a labour camp in 1938.

There was more freedom for ordinary people, and a higher standard of living. It was estimated that in 1958 at least 100 million people were living below the poverty line, but in 1967 this had fallen to about 30 million; the improvement was due mainly to the introduction of a minimum wage.

There was more freedom for writers, for whom Khrushchev had great respect. Ilya Ehrenburg caused a stir with the publication of *The Thaw*, a novel full of criticisms of the Stalin era (1954). Anna Akhmatova, Bulgakov and Meyerhold were rehabilitated. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, about an innocent man sentenced to hard labour, drew on his own experiences of eight years in a camp. The simple test of Khrushchev's reaction to a new work was: if it attacked Stalin and his system, it would be approved; if it attacked the Party or present aspects of Soviet life, it would be denounced and banned. Some writers overstepped the mark and found themselves disgraced and expelled from the writers' union. But at least they did not end up in labour camps.

The 'thaw' also had its limits in other areas; for example, Khrushchev decided that the Orthodox Church was gaining too much influence in Soviet life. Thousands of churches were closed down and it was illegal to hold gatherings in private houses without permission; since this was never granted for religious meetings, it became extremely difficult for Christians to worship. In 1962 when some factory workers at Novocherkassk went on strike and organized a demonstration in protest against increases in meat and dairy prices, tanks and troops were called in. Troops fired into the crowd, killing 23 people and injuring dozens more; 49 people were arrested and five of the ringleaders were executed.

4 Foreign affairs

Following his Twentieth Party Congress speech, Khrushchev aimed for *peaceful coexistence and a thaw in the Cold War*, and seemed prepared to allow different 'roads to socialism' among the satellite states of eastern Europe. However, these departures from strict Marxist–Leninist ideas (including his encouragement of profit and wage incentives) laid him open to Chinese accusations of *revisionism*. In addition, encouraged by his speech, Poland and Hungary tried to break free from Moscow's grip. Khrushchev's reaction to the developments in Hungary, where the 'rising' was brutally crushed, showed how limited his toleration was. The greatest crisis of all came in 1962 when the USSR clashed with the USA over the question of the Russian missiles in Cuba.

(c) Khrushchev's fall

In October 1964 the Central Committee of the Party voted Khrushchev into retirement on the grounds of ill health; in fact, although he was 70, his health was perfectly good. The real reasons were probably the failure of his agricultural policy (though he had been no less successful than previous governments in this), his loss of prestige over the Cuban missiles crisis, and the widening breach with China, which he made no attempt to heal. He had offended many important groups in society: his attempts to make the Party and the government more efficient and decentralized brought him into conflict with the bureaucracy, whose privileged positions were being threatened. The military disapproved of his cuts in defence spending and his attempts to limit nuclear weapons. Perhaps his colleagues were tired of his extrovert personality (once, in a heated moment at the United Nations, he took off his shoe and hammered the table with it) and felt he was taking too much on himself. Without consulting them, he had just tried to win the friendship of President Nasser of Egypt by awarding him the Order of Lenin at a time when he was busy arresting Egyptian communists. Khrushchev had become increasingly aggressive and arrogant, and at times seemed to have developed the 'cult of personality' almost as much as Stalin.

In spite of his failures, many historians believe that Khrushchev deserves considerable credit; his period in power has been described as 'the Khrushchev revolution'. He was a man of outstanding personality: a tough politician and yet at the same time impulsive and full of warmth and humour. After Stalin's grim remoteness, his more approachable and human style was more than welcome; he deserves to be remembered for the return to comparatively civilized politics (at least inside Russia). Alec Nove believed that the improvement in living standards and his social policies were perhaps his greatest achievements. Others see his 'peaceful coexistence' policy and his willingness to reduce nuclear weapons as a remarkable change in attitude.

Martin McCauley sees Khrushchev as a kind of heroic failure, a man with a noble vision, whose success was only modest because he was let down by the greed and concern for their own positions of those in authority. Powerful vested interests in the Party and the state administration did everything they could to delay his attempts to decentralize and 'return power to the people'. Dmitri Volkogonov, who was not a great admirer of any of the Soviet leaders, wrote that Khrushchev had achieved the virtually impossible: as a product of the Stalinist system, 'he had undergone a visible change in himself and in a fundamental way also changed society. However much his successor, Brezhnev, may have sympathized with Stalinism, he could not bring himself to restore it; the obstacles placed in his way by Khrushchev proved insurmountable'.

16.2 THE USSR STAGNATES, 1964–85

(a) The Brezhnev era

After Khrushchev's departure, three men, Kosygin, Brezhnev and Podgorny, seemed to be sharing power. At first Kosygin was the leading figure and the chief spokesman on foreign affairs, while Brezhnev and Podgorny looked after home affairs. In the early 1970s, Kosygin was eclipsed by Brezhnev after a disagreement over economic policies. Kosygin pressed for more economic decentralization, but this was unpopular with the other leaders, who claimed that it encouraged too much independence of thought in the satellite states, especially Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev established firm personal control by 1977, and he remained leader until his death in November 1982. Reform disappeared from the agenda; most of Khrushchev's policies were abandoned and serious economic problems were ignored. Brezhnev and his colleagues were less tolerant of criticism than Khrushchev; anything that threatened the stability of the system or encouraged independent thinking was stifled, and this applied to the states of eastern Europe as well. Brezhnev's main concern seems to have been to keep the *nomemklatura* (the ruling elite and the bureaucracy) happy.

1 Economic policies

Economic policies maintained wage differentials and profit incentives, and some growth took place, but the rate was slow. The system remained strongly centralized, and Brezhnev was reluctant to take any major initiatives. By 1982 therefore, much of Russian industry was old-fashioned and in need of new production and processing technology. There was concern about the failure of the coal and oil industries to increase output, and the building industry was notorious for slowness and poor quality. Low agricultural yield was still a major problem – not once in the period 1980–4 did grain production come anywhere near the targets set. The 1981 harvest was disastrous and 1982 was only slightly better, throwing Russia into an uncomfortable dependence on American wheat. It was calculated that in the USA in 1980 one agricultural worker produced enough to feed 75 people, while his counterpart in Russia could manage only enough to feed 10.

The one section of the economy which was successful was the production of military hardware. By the early 1970s the USSR had caught up with the USA in numbers of intercontinental missiles, and had developed a new weapon, the anti-ballistic missile (ABM). Unfortunately, the arms race did not stop there – the Americans continued to produce even more deadly missiles, and at each step, the USSR strained to draw level again. *This was the basic problem of the Soviet economy – defence spending was so vast that the civilian areas of the economy were deprived of the necessary investment to keep them up to date*.

2 The Eastern bloc

The Eastern bloc states were expected to obey Moscow's wishes and to maintain their existing structure. When liberal trends developed in Czechoslovakia (especially the abolition of press censorship), a massive invasion took place by Russian and other Warsaw Pact troops. The reforming government of Dubček was replaced by a strongly centralized, pro-Moscow regime (1968). Soon afterwards Brezhnev declared the so-called *Brezhnev Doctrine*: according to this, intervention in the internal affairs of any communist country was justified *if socialism in that country was considered to be threatened*. This caused some friction with Romania, which had always tried to maintain some independence, refusing to send troops into Czechoslovakia and keeping on good terms with China. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan (1979) was the most blatant application of the doctrine,

while more subtle pressures were brought to bear on Poland (1981) to control the independent trade union movement, Solidarity.

3 Social policy and human rights

Brezhnev genuinely wanted the workers to be better-off and more comfortable, and there is no doubt that life improved for most people during these years. Unemployment was almost eliminated and there was a full programme of social security. The increasing amount of accommodation enabled millions of people to move from communal apartments to single-family flats.

However, personal freedom became more limited. For instance, by 1970 it was impossible to get any writings published which were critical of Stalin. Historians such as Roy Medvedev and Viktor Danilov had their latest books banned, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, after the success of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, found that his next two novels, *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, were rejected. He was expelled from the writers' union, which meant that it was impossible for him to publish in the USSR.

The KGB (secret police) were now using a new technique to deal with 'troublemakers' – they were confined in psychiatric hospitals or mental asylums, where some were kept for many years. In May 1970 the biologist and writer Zhores Medvedev, Roy's twin brother, was locked up in a mental hospital and diagnosed as suffering from 'creeping schizophrenia'; the real reason was that his writings were considered to be anti-Soviet. This sort of treatment made reform-minded intellectuals more determined to persevere. A Human Rights Committee was formed by the physicists Andrei Sakharov and Valeri Chalidze, to protest about conditions in labour camps and prisons, and to demand free speech and all the other rights promised in the constitution. Writers began to circulate works in typescript around their little groups, a practice known as *samizdat* – self-publishing.

The Human Rights Committee gained a new weapon in 1975 when the USSR, along with the USA and other nations, signed the Helsinki Final Treaty. Among other things, this provided for economic and scientific cooperation between East and West, as well as full human rights. Brezhnev claimed to be in favour of the treaty, and appeared to make important concessions about human rights in the USSR, but in fact little progress was made. Groups were set up to check whether the terms of the agreement were being kept, but the authorities put them under intense pressure. Their members were arrested, imprisoned, exiled or deported, and finally the groups were dissolved altogether. Only Sakharov was spared, because he was so internationally renowned that there would have been a worldwide outcry had he been arrested. He was sent into internal exile in Gorky and later in Siberia.

4 Foreign policy

'Peaceful coexistence' was the only Khrushchev initiative which was continued during the Brezhnev period. The Russians were anxious for détente, especially as relations with China deteriorated almost to the point of open warfare in 1969. But after 1979 relations with the West deteriorated sharply as a result of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. Brezhnev continued to advocate disarmament but presided over a rapid increase in Soviet armed forces, particularly the navy and the new SS-20 missiles. He stepped up Soviet aid to Cuba and offered aid to Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia.

(b) Andropov and Chernenko

After Brezhnev's death in 1982, Russia was ruled for a short period by two elderly and ailing politicians – Yuri Andropov (November 1982–February 1984) and then Konstantin Chernenko (February 1984–March 1985). Head of the KGB until May

1982, Andropov immediately launched a vigorous campaign to modernize and streamline the Soviet system. He began an anti-corruption drive and introduced a programme of economic reform, hoping to increase production by encouraging decentralization. Some of the older party officials were replaced with younger, more go-ahead men. Unfortunately Andropov was dogged by ill health and died after little more than a year in office.

The 72-year-old Chernenko was a more conventional type of Soviet politician; he owed his rise to the fact that for many years he had been Brezhnev's personal assistant, and he was already terminally ill when he was chosen as next leader by the Politburo. Clearly the majority wanted somebody who would abandon the anti-corruption campaign and leave them in peace. There was no relaxation in the treatment of human rights activists. Sakharov was still kept in exile in Siberia (where he had been since 1980), in spite of appeals by western leaders for his release. Members of an unofficial trade union, supporters of a group 'for the establishment of trust between the USSR and the USA' and members of unofficial religious groups were all arrested. This was how Dmitri Volkogonov (in *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire*) summed up Chernenko's 13 months in power: 'Chernenko was not capable of leading the country or the party into the future. His rise to power symbolized the deepening of the crisis in society, the total lack of positive ideas in the party, and the inevitability of the convulsions to come'.

16.3 GORBACHEV AND THE END OF COMMUNIST RULE

Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in March 1985, was, at 54, the most gifted and dynamic leader Russia had seen for many years. He was determined to transform and revitalize the country after the sterile years following Khrushchev's fall. He intended to achieve this by *modernizing and streamlining the Communist Party* with new policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring – of the Party, the economy and the government). The new thinking soon made an impact on foreign affairs, with initiatives on détente, relations with China, a withdrawal from Afghanistan and ultimately the ending of the Cold War in late 1990.

Gorbachev outlined what was wrong at home in a speech to the Party Conference in 1988: the system was too centralized, leaving no room for local individual initiative. It was a 'command' economy, based almost completely on state ownership and control, and weighted strongly towards defence and heavy industry, leaving consumer goods for ordinary people in short supply. *Gorbachev did **not** want to end communism; he wanted to replace the existing system*, *which was still basically Stalinist*, *with a socialist system which was humane and democratic*. He sincerely believed that this could be achieved within the framework of the Marxist–Leninist one-party state. He did not have the same success at home as abroad. His policies failed to provide results quickly enough, and led to the collapse of communism, the break-up of the USSR, and the end of his own political career.

(a) Gorbachev's new policies

1 Glasnost

Glasnost was soon seen in areas such as *human rights and cultural affairs*. Several well-known dissidents were released, and the Sakharovs were allowed to return to Moscow from internal exile in Gorky (December 1986). Leaders like Bukharin, who had been disgraced and executed during Stalin's purges of the 1930s, were declared innocent of

all crimes. *Pravda* was allowed to print an article criticizing Brezhnev for overreacting against dissidents, and a new law was introduced to prevent dissidents from being sent to mental institutions (January 1988). Important political events like the Nineteenth Party Conference in 1988 and the first session of the new Congress of People's Deputies (May 1989) were televised.

In cultural matters and the media generally, there were some startling developments. In May 1986 both the Union of Soviet Film-makers and the Union of Writers were allowed to sack their reactionary heads and elect more independent-minded leaders. Long-banned anti-Stalin films and novels were shown and published, and preparations were made to publish works by the great poet Osip Mandelstam, who died in a labour camp in 1938.

There was a new freedom in news reporting: in April 1986, for example, when a nuclear reactor at Chernobyl in the Ukraine exploded, killing hundreds of people and releasing a massive radioactive cloud which drifted across most of Europe, the disaster was discussed with unprecedented frankness. The aims of this new approach were to use the media to publicize the inefficiency and corruption which the government was so anxious to stamp out, to educate public opinion and to mobilize support for the new policies. *Glasnost* was encouraged provided nobody criticized the Party itself.

2 Economic affairs

Important changes were soon afoot. In November 1986 Gorbachev announced that 1987 was to be 'the year for broad applications of the new methods of economic management'. Small-scale private enterprise such as family restaurants, family businesses making clothes or handicrafts or providing services such as car and television repairs, painting and decorating and private tuition was to be allowed, and so were workers' co-operatives up to a maximum of 50 workers. One motive behind this reform was the desire to provide competition for the slow and inefficient services provided by the state, in the hope of stimulating a rapid improvement. Another was the need to provide alternative jobs as patterns of employment changed over the following decade: it was clear that as more automation and computerization were introduced into factories and offices, the need for manual and clerical workers would decline.

Another important change was that responsibility for quality control throughout industry as a whole was to be taken over by independent state bodies rather than factory management. The most important part of the reforms was *the Law on State Enterprises (June 1987)*; this removed the central planners' total control over raw materials, production quotas and trade, and made factories work to orders from customers.

3 Political changes

These began in January 1987 when Gorbachev announced moves towards democracy within the Party. Instead of members of local soviets being *appointed* by the local Communist Party, they were to be *elected by the people*, and there was to be a choice of candidates (though not of parties). There were to be secret elections for top party positions, and elections in factories to choose managers.

During 1988 dramatic changes in central government were achieved. The old parliament (Supreme Soviet) of around 1450 deputies only met for about two weeks each year. Its function was to elect two smaller bodies – the Praesidium (33 members) and the Council of Ministers (71 members). It was these two committees which took all important decisions and saw that policies were carried out. Now the Supreme Soviet was to be replaced by a Congress of People's Deputies (2250 members), whose main function was to elect a new and much smaller Supreme Soviet (450 representatives), which would be

a proper working parliament, sitting for about eight months a year. The chairman of the Supreme Soviet would be head of state.

Elections went ahead, and the first Congress of People's Deputies met in May 1989. Well-known figures elected included Roy Medvedev, Andrei Sakharov and Boris Yeltsin. This was a dramatic comeback for Yeltsin, who had been sacked as Moscow first secretary and forced to resign from the Politburo by the conservatives (traditionalists) in the Party in November 1987. During the second session (December 1989), it was decided that reserved seats for the Communist Party should be abolished. Gorbachev was elected president of the Soviet Union (March 1990), with two councils to advise and help him: one contained his own personal advisers, the other contained representatives from the 15 republics. These new bodies completely sidelined the old system, and it meant that the Communist Party was on the verge of losing its privileged position. At the next election, due in 1994, even Gorbachev would have to stand and put himself to the test of a popular vote.

(b) What went wrong with Gorbachev's policies?

1 Opposition from radicals and conservatives

As the reforms got under way, Gorbachev ran into problems. Some party members, such as Boris Yeltsin, were more radical than Gorbachev, and felt that the reforms were not drastic enough. They wanted a change to a western-style market economy as quickly as possible, though they knew this would cause great short-term hardship for the Russian people. On the other hand, the conservatives, like Yegor Ligachev, felt that the changes were too drastic and that the Party was in danger of losing control. This caused a dangerous split in the Party and made it difficult for Gorbachev to satisfy either group. Although he had some sympathy with Yeltsin's views, he could not afford to side with Yeltsin against Ligachev, because Ligachev controlled the party apparatus.

The conservatives were in a large majority, and when the Congress of People's Deputies elected the new Supreme Soviet (May 1989), it was packed with conservatives; Yeltsin and many other radicals were not elected. This led to massive protest demonstrations in Moscow, where Yeltsin was a popular figure, since he had cleaned up the corrupt Moscow Communist Party organization. Demonstrations would not have been allowed before Gorbachev's time, but *glasnost* – encouraging people to voice their criticisms – was now in full flow, and was beginning to turn against the Communist Party.

2 The economic reforms did not produce results quickly enough

The rate of economic growth in 1988 and 1989 stayed exactly the same as it had been in previous years. In 1990 national income actually fell, and continued to fall – by about 15 per cent – in 1991. Some economists think that the USSR was going through an economic crisis as serious as the one in the USA in the early 1930s.

A major cause of the crisis was the disastrous results of the Law on State Enterprises. The problem was that wages were now dependent on output, but since output was measured by its value in roubles, factories were tempted not to increase overall output, but to concentrate on more expensive goods and reduce output of cheaper goods. This led to higher wages, forcing the government to print more money to pay them with. Inflation soared, and so did the government's budget deficit. Basic goods such as soap, washing-powder, razor-blades, cups and saucers, TV sets and food were in very short supply, and the queues in the towns got longer.

Disillusion with Gorbachev and his reforms rapidly set in, and, having had their expectations raised by his promises, people became outraged at the shortages. In July 1989 some coal miners in Siberia found there was no soap to wash themselves with at the end of their shift. 'What kind of a regime is it', they asked, 'if we can't even get washed?' After staging a sit-in, they decided to go on strike; they were quickly joined by other miners in Siberia, in Kazakhstan and in the Donbass (Ukraine), the biggest coalmining area in the USSR, until half a million miners were on strike. It was the first major strike since 1917. The miners were well disciplined and organized, holding mass meetings outside party headquarters in the main towns. They put forward detailed demands, 42 in all. These included better living and working conditions, better supplies of food, a share in the profits and more local control over the mines. Later, influenced by what was happening in Poland, where a non-communist president had just been elected – they called for independent trade unions like Poland's Solidarity, and in some areas they demanded an end to the privileged position of the Communist Party. The government soon gave way and granted many of the demands, promising a complete reorganization of the industry and full local control.

By the end of July the strike was over, but the general economic situation did not improve. Early in 1990 it was calculated that about a quarter of the population was living below the poverty line; worst affected were those with large families, the unemployed and pensioners. *Gorbachev was fast losing control of the reform movement which he had started*, and the success of the miners was bound to encourage the radicals to press for even more far-reaching changes.

3 Nationalist pressures

These also contributed towards Gorbachev's failure and led to the break-up of the USSR. The Soviet Union was a federal state consisting of 15 separate republics, each with its own parliament. The Russian republic was just one of the 15, with its parliament in Moscow. (Moscow was also the meeting place for the *federal* Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies.) The republics had been kept under tight control since Stalin's time, but *glasnost* and *perestroika* encouraged them to hope for more powers for their parliaments and more independence from Moscow. Gorbachev himself seemed sympathetic, provided that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) remained in overall control. However, once started, demands got out of hand.

- *Trouble began in Nagorno-Karabakh*, a small Christian autonomous republic within the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, which was Muslim. The parliament of Nagorno-Karabakh asked to become part of neighbouring Christian Armenia (February 1988), but Gorbachev refused. He was afraid that if he agreed, this would upset the conservatives (who opposed internal frontier changes) and turn them against his entire reform programme. Fighting broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Moscow had clearly lost control.
- *Worse was to follow in the three Baltic soviet republics of Lithuania*, *Latvia and Estonia*, which had been taken over against their will by the Russians in 1940. Independence movements, denounced by Gorbachev as 'national excesses', had been growing in strength. In March 1990, encouraged by what was happening in the satellite states of eastern Europe, Lithuania took the lead by declaring itself independent. The other two soon followed, though they voted to proceed more gradually. Moscow refused to recognize their independence.
- Boris Yeltsin, who had been excluded from the new Supreme Soviet by the conservatives, made a dramatic comeback when he was elected president of the parliament of the Russian republic (Russian Federation) in May 1990.

4 Rivalry between Gorbachev and Yeltsin

Gorbachev and Yeltsin were now bitter rivals, disagreeing on many fundamental issues.

- *Yeltsin believed that the union should be voluntary*: each republic should be independent but also have joint responsibilities to the Soviet Union as well. If any republic wanted to opt out, as Lithuania did, it should be allowed to do so. However, Gorbachev thought that a purely voluntary union would lead to disintegration.
- Yeltsin was now completely disillusioned with the Communist Party and the way the traditionalists had treated him. He thought the Party no longer deserved its privileged position in the state. Gorbachev was still hoping against hope that the Party could be transformed into a humane and democratic organization.
- On the economy, Yeltsin thought the answer was a rapid changeover to a market economy, though he knew that this would be painful for the Russian people. Gorbachev was much more cautious, realizing that Yeltsin's plans would cause massive unemployment and even higher prices. He was fully aware of how unpopular he was already; if things got even worse, he might well be overthrown.

(c) The coup of August 1991

As the crisis deepened, Gorbachev and Yeltsin tried to work together, and Gorbachev found himself being pushed towards free, multi-party elections. This brought bitter attacks from Ligachev and the conservatives, who were already outraged at the way Gorbachev had 'lost' eastern Europe without putting up a fight, and worst of all, had allowed Germany to be reunited. In July 1990, Yeltsin resigned from the Communist Party. Gorbachev was now losing control: many of the republics were demanding independence, and when Soviet troops were used against nationalists in Lithuania and Latvia, the people organized massive demonstrations. In April 1991, Georgia declared independence: it seemed that the USSR was falling apart. However, the following month Gorbachev held a conference with the leaders of the 15 republics and persuaded them to form a new voluntary union in which they would be largely independent of Moscow. The agreement was to be formally signed on 20 August 1991.

At this point a group of hardline communists, including Gorbachev's vice-president, Gennady Yanayev, decided they had had enough, and launched a coup to remove Gorbachev and reverse his reforms. On 18 August, Gorbachev, who was on holiday in the Crimea, was arrested and told to hand over power to Yanayev. When he refused, he was kept under house arrest while the coup went ahead in Moscow. The public was told that Gorbachev was ill and that an eight-member committee was now in charge. They declared a state of emergency, banned demonstrations and brought in tanks and troops to surround public buildings in Moscow, including the White House (the parliament of the Russian Federation), which they intended to seize. Gorbachev's new union treaty, which was due to be signed the following day, was cancelled.

However, *the coup was poorly organized and the leaders failed to have Yeltsin arrested*. He rushed to the White House, and, standing on a tank outside, condemned the coup and called on the people of Moscow to rally round in support. The troops were confused, not knowing which side to support, but none of them would make a move against the popular Yeltsin. It soon became clear that some sections of the army were sympathetic to the reformers. By the evening of 20 August, thousands of people were on the streets, barricades were built against the tanks and the army hesitated to cause heavy casualties by attacking the White House. On 21 August the coup leaders admitted defeat, and they were eventually arrested. Yeltsin had triumphed and Gorbachev was able to

return to Moscow. But things could never be the same again, and the failed coup had important consequences.

- The Communist Party was disgraced and discredited by the actions of the hardliners. Even Gorbachev was now convinced that the Party was beyond reform and he soon resigned as party general secretary; the Party was banned in the Russian Federation.
- Yeltsin was seen as the hero and Gorbachev was increasingly sidelined. Yeltsin ruled the Russian Federation as a separate republic, introducing a drastic programme to move to a free-market economy. When Ukraine, the second largest Soviet republic, voted to become independent (1 December 1991), it was clear that the old USSR was finished.
- Yeltsin was already negotiating for a new union of the republics. This was joined first by the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belorussia (8 December 1991), and eight other republics joined later. The new union was known as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Although the member states were fully independent, they agreed to work together on economic matters and defence.
- These developments meant that Gorbachev's role as president of the USSR had ceased to exist, and he resigned on Christmas Day 1991.

(d) Assessment of Gorbachev

At the time of his downfall, and for some years afterwards, a majority of people in Russia dismissed him as a failure, though for different reasons. The conservatives, who thought the USSR and the Party still had a lot to offer, saw him as a traitor. Radical reformers thought he had stayed with communism too long, trying to reform the unreformable. Ordinary people thought he was incompetent and weak, and had allowed their standard of living to decline.

However, there can be no question that Gorbachev was one of the outstanding leaders of the twentieth century, although his career was a mixture of brilliant successes and disappointing failures. Some historians see him as the real successor of Lenin, and believe that he was trying to get communism back on the track intended for it by Lenin before it was hijacked by Stalin, who twisted and perverted it. The two main disappointments were his failure to streamline the economy, and his complete misunderstanding of the nationalities problem, which led to the break-up of the USSR.

On the other hand, his achievements were enormous. Archie Brown sums them up:

> He played the decisive part in allowing the countries of Eastern Europe to become free and independent. He did more than anyone else to end the Cold War between East and West. He initiated fundamental rethinking about the political and economic systems he inherited and about better alternatives. He presided over the introduction of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, religious freedom and freedom of movement, and left Russia a *freer country* than it had been in its long history.

He began by believing that the Communist Party could be reformed and modernized, and that once this was achieved, there could be no better system. But he discovered that the majority of the Party – the elite and the bureaucracy – were resisting change for their own selfish reasons; the whole system was riddled with racketeers, black-market operators and all kinds of corruption. This discovery led Gorbachev to change his aims: if the Party refused to reform itself, then the Party would have to lose its dominant role. He achieved that goal peacefully, without bloodshed, which was remarkable in the circumstances. His

achievement, especially in foreign affairs, was enormous. His policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* restored freedom to the people of the USSR. His policies of reducing military expenditure, détente and withdrawal from Afghanistan and eastern Europe made a vital contribution to the ending of the Cold War.

(e) Was the communist system reformable?

Could Russian communism have survived if Gorbachev had followed different policies? Many Russians are convinced that it could, and that if the USSR had followed the same path as China, it would still be communist today. The argument is that both Russia and China needed reform in two areas – the Communist Party and government, and the economy. Gorbachev believed these could only be achieved one at a time, and chose to introduce the political reforms first, without any really fundamental economic innovations. The Chinese did it the other way round, introducing economic reform first and leaving the power of the Communist Party unchanged. This meant that although the people suffered economic hardship, the government retained tight control over them, and in the last resort was prepared to use force against them, unlike Gorbachev.

Vladimir Bukovsky, a reformer and social democrat, explained where Gorbachev went wrong: 'His only instrument of power was the Communist Party, but his reforms weakened precisely that instrument. He was like the proverbial man sawing off the branch on which he was sitting. There could be no other outcome except what happened'. If Gorbachev had put into operation a carefully worked-out programme of economic reform designed to last ten years, arguably the situation could have been saved.

Other observers argue that the Communist Party was beyond reform. They point out that any political system or party which enjoys a long, uninterrupted period in power becomes arrogant, complacent and corrupt. Both Khrushchev and Gorbachev tried to reform the *nomenklatura*, and both failed, because the elite, the bureaucracy in the government and the economic system, were solely concerned to further their own careers and refused to respond to the changing circumstances. In theory, reform should have been possible, but it might have been necessary to use force, as the Chinese government did in Tiananmen Square. Given Gorbachev's extreme reluctance to resort to force, the prospects for success would not seem promising.

(f) The legacy of communism

Any regime in power for over 70 years is bound to leave its marks, both good and bad, on the country. Most historians seem to feel that the achievements of communism are outweighed by its ill effects. And yet no system could have survived for so long by force alone. One important achievement was that the system brought benefits in the form of promotion, and reasonably well-paid jobs with privileges, to large numbers of people from 'lower-class' backgrounds who had been excluded from such things under the tsarist regime. Education and literacy became more widespread; Soviet 'culture' was encouraged and so was sport; the performing arts, especially music, were subsidized by the state, and science was given special prominence and funding. Perhaps the greatest achievement of communism was that it played a vital role in defeating the evil regime of Hitler and the Nazis. After Stalin's death, although in one sense the country stagnated, the system brought a certain stability and an improved standard of living for the majority of its people.

On the other hand, the Soviet system left behind a whole range of problems which would be extremely difficult for the succeeding regime to cope with. The whole system was rigid and over-centralized, initiative had been stifled for generations and the

bureaucrats opposed any radical changes. The country was overburdened with its vast military expenditure. Boris Yeltsin had played an important part in destroying the Soviet system. Would he be able to do any better?

16.4 THE AFTERMATH OF COMMUNISM, YELTSIN, PUTIN AND MEDVEDEV

Yeltsin's eight years as president of Russia were packed with incident as he and his successive prime ministers tried to transform the country into a political democracy with a market economy, in the shortest time possible.

(a) Yeltsin, Gaidar and 'shock therapy'

Boris Yeltsin's problem was daunting: how best *to dismantle the command economy and transform Russia into a market economy* by privatizing the inefficient, subsidized state industries and agriculture. Yeltsin was hugely popular, but this would only last if he could improve the people's living standards. He chose as his vice-president Yegor Gaidar, a young economist who was influenced by the theories of the Western monetarists. He convinced Yeltsin that the necessary changes could be achieved in one year, beginning with 'price liberalization' and going on to privatize almost the entire economy. It would be difficult for about six months, but he assured Yeltsin that things would then stabilize and people's lives would gradually improve.

This 'shock therapy', as it was called, began in January 1992 with the removal of price controls from about 90 per cent of goods, and the ending of government subsidies to industry. Prices rose steeply and kept on rising after the first six months. By the end of the year prices were, on average, 30 times higher than at the beginning; there were plenty of goods in the shops but most people could not afford to buy them. The situation was disastrous, since wages did not keep pace with prices; as sales fell, factory workers were laid off, and over a million people lost their jobs. Thousands were homeless and were forced to live in tents outside the towns. Many people had to rely on food parcels sent from abroad.

When the privatization programme began, it seemed as though the intention was for all big state industries and collective farms to be transferred to the joint ownership of all the people. Every citizen was given vouchers to the value of 10 000 roubles as their share, and there were plans for workers to be able to buy shares in their enterprise. However, none of this happened; 10 000 roubles was the equivalent of about £35 – a minute amount at a time of rapid inflation; nor could most workers afford to buy shares. What happened was that managers were able to buy up and accumulate enough vouchers to take over the ownership of their plant. This continued until by the end of 1995 most of the former state industry had fallen into the hands of a relatively small group of financiers, who became known as the 'oligarchs'. They made enormous profits, but from government subsidies, which were reintroduced, rather than from the market. Instead of reinvesting their profits in industry, as the government intended, they transferred them into Swiss bank accounts and foreign investments. Total investment in Russia fell by two-thirds.

Long before this stage was reached, Yeltsin's popularity had dwindled. Two of his former supporters, Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov, led the opposition in the Supreme Soviet and forced Yeltsin to dismiss Gaidar, replacing him with Viktor Chernomyrdin. In January 1993 he reintroduced some controls on prices and profits, but at the end of 1993, after two years of 'shock therapy', according to one report: 'Our country has been thrown back two centuries to the "savage era" of capitalism'. As a

first experience of any kind of 'democracy', it was a grave disappointment for the vast majority of people. In the words of Daniel Beer, 'the Yeltsin government presided over an economic collapse so vast and devastating that for most Russians the term became synonymous with chaos and the plunder of state property (that is, society's) by a small clique of robber barons. … By 1993 Russians were bitterly referring to *dermocracy – dermo* being the Russian for "shit"'. Sadly, corruption, fraud, bribery and criminal activity became part of everyday life in Russia. Another report, prepared for Yeltsin early in 1994, estimated that *criminal mafias had gained control of between 70 and 80 per cent of all business and banking*. One Russian writer, Alexander Chubarov, recently described the government's policies as 'deformed capitalism'. It was an attempt to create in six months the sort of market capitalism which had taken generations to evolve in the West.

(b) Opposition and the 'civil war' in Moscow

The leading politicians lacked experience of democracy as well as of how to organize a market economy. At first there were no properly organized political parties on the western model, and the constitution, a leftover from the Soviet era, was unclear about the division of powers between president and parliament. However, in November 1992 the Communist Party was legalized again, and other groups began to form, although Yeltsin himself did not have a supporting party. *A majority in parliament strongly opposed Yeltsin's policies and tried to get rid of him*, but in a referendum in April 1993, 53 per cent of voters expressed approval of his social and economic policies. Yeltsin's success surprised many, and suggested that although he was unpopular, people had even less confidence in the alternatives.

Yeltsin now tried to neutralize parliament by producing a new constitution, making parliament subordinate to the president. Khasbulatov and Rutskoi were determined not to succumb. They rushed to the White House, where the Supreme Soviet met, and barricaded themselves in, together with hundreds of deputies, journalists and supporters. After a few days the building was surrounded by troops loyal to Yeltsin; some supporters of parliament attacked the mayor of Moscow's headquarters and a television station, whereupon Yeltsin ordered the troops to storm the White House (3 October 1993). Eventually the deputies surrendered, though not before around 200 had been killed, some 800 wounded and the White House badly damaged. Yeltsin's new constitution was narrowly approved in a referendum (December 1993). In elections for the new lower house of parliament (the *Duma*), Yeltsin's supporters won only 70 seats out of 450 whereas the Communist bloc won 103. This was a clear rebuff for Yeltsin, *but his power was not affected since the new constitution allowed him to dismiss parliament and rule by decree if he chose to*.

Although he had great power, Yeltsin knew that he could not afford to ignore public opinion completely, especially since presidential elections were due in 1996. He tried to avoid confrontation with the *Duma* and relations improved. Meanwhile the move towards privatization continued and the creation of a new, wealthy property-owning class was completed. Yet the state treasury seemed to benefit very little from these sales; what had happened was that, in effect, the state enterprises had been sold off to former managers, entrepreneurs, bankers and politicians at knock-down prices. Strangely, Yeltsin, who had once been the scourge of corrupt officials in Moscow, did very little to restrain his underlings. *For most people there were no obvious signs of improvement*: prices continued to rise during 1995; the number of people living in poverty, unemployment and the death rate increased; and the birth rate declined. The situation had not been helped by the outbreak of war with the Chechen republic in December 1994.

(c) Conflict in Chechnya, 1994–6

The Chechens are an Islamic people numbering about 1 million, who live in the area north of Georgia, inside the borders of the Russian republic. They were never happy under Russian control; they resisted communist rule during its early years and the civil war, and they resisted collectivization. During the Second World War Stalin accused them of collaborating with the Germans; the entire nation was brutally deported to Central Asia, and thousands died on the way. In 1956 Khrushchev allowed the Chechens to return to their homeland, and their autonomous republic was restored.

When the USSR broke up, Chechnya declared itself an independent republic under the leadership of Jokhar Dudaev. After attempts to persuade them to rejoin the Russian Federation failed, Yeltsin decided to use force against them. Reasons given were that their declaration of independence was illegal and that Chechnya was being used as a base from which criminal gangs were operating throughout Russia. In December 1994, 40 000 Russian troops invaded Chechnya. To their surprise there was fierce resistance before the Chechen capital, Grozny, was captured in February 1995. All round the world, television viewers saw shocking images of Russian tanks rolling through the ruined city. But the Chechens would not surrender and continued to harass the Russians with guerrilla attacks. In the summer of 1996, by the time the Chechens had succeeded in recapturing Grozny, the Russians had lost 20 000 men. The *Duma* had voted overwhelmingly against military action and the general public did not support the war. As the elections drew nearer, Yeltsin decided to compromise and a ceasefire was signed (May 1996). The Russians agreed to withdraw their troops, the Chechens promised to set up a government acceptable to Moscow and there was to be a cooling-off period of five years. However, the Chechens did not drop their demands for independence, and fighting started again long before five years had elapsed.

(d) Elections: December 1995 and June/July 1996

Under the terms of the new constitution, elections for the *Duma* were to be held in December 1995 and the presidential election in June 1996. The results of the *Duma* elections were disappointing for the government, which was still unpopular. Yeltsin and his supporters won only 65 seats out of the 450, whereas the Communist Party, led by Gennady Zyuganov, took 157 seats; together with their allies, they could muster 186 seats, by far the largest grouping. There was obviously much residual support and nostalgia for the old days of the USSR and strong government. In a genuinely democratic system the communists would have taken a leading role in the next government; but this did not happen: Yeltsin remained president for the time being at least. The big question was: would the communist candidate win the presidential election the following June?

Almost immediately, the politicians began to prepare for the June election. Yeltsin's popularity rating was so low that some of his advisers wanted him to cancel the election and resort to force if necessary. However, to his credit he allowed it to go ahead, and over 20 candidates registered for the first round, including the communist leader Zyuganov and Mikhail Gorbachev. Early opinion polls put Zyuganov as the likely winner, causing consternation in the West at the prospect of a return to communism. However, Yeltsin and his supporters rallied well; he had suffered a heart attack in the summer of 1995 but now he seemed to find new energy, and toured the country promising everything to everybody. His greatest boost came when the ceasefire was signed in Chechnya shortly before the election.

Zyuganov also presented an attractive programme, but he lacked Yeltsin's personal charisma and failed to distance himself sufficiently from Stalin. In the first round Yeltsin won a narrow victory with 35 per cent of the votes to Zyuganov's 32 per cent; Gorbachev received barely 1 per cent of the votes. In spite of his ill health, Yeltsin's team continued

to campaign vigorously; in the second round he won a decisive victory over Zyuganov, taking 54 per cent of the votes. It was a remarkable victory, considering his low popularity at the beginning of the campaign and the fact that the economic situation was only just beginning to improve. The reason for Yeltsin's victory was not so much that people liked him, but that they liked the alternative even less. If the communists had put forward genuine social democrat policies, Zyuganov might well have won. But Zyuganov was not a social democrat; he made no secret of his admiration for Stalin, and this was a fatal mistake. When it came to the push, the majority of Russians could not bring themselves to vote a Stalinist-type communist back into power. They gritted their teeth and voted for the lesser of two evils.

(e) Yeltsin's second term, 1996–9

As Yeltsin began his second term as president, it seemed that at last things had reached a turning point: inflation had fallen to only 1 per cent a month, and for the first time since 1990, production ceased to fall. *But the promise was not fulfilled*. The great weakness of the economy was lack of investment, without which no significant expansion could take place. In the autumn of 1997, external events had an adverse effect on Russia. There was a series of financial crises and disaster in the Asian 'tiger' economies – Thailand, Singapore and South Korea – which affected stock markets all over the world. There was a fall in the world price of oil because of overproduction, which was a disaster for the Russians, since oil was their greatest export earner. The projected profits for 1998 were wiped out, foreign investors withdrew their funds and the Central Bank was forced to devalue the rouble (August 1998). It was another financial catastrophe in which millions of people had their savings and capital rendered worthless.

With the government floundering, the *Duma* suggested a new prime minister, Evgeny Primakov, a distinguished economic scientist and veteran communist who believed that the state should continue to play an important role in organizing the economy. To the surprise of most people, Yeltsin agreed to appoint Primakov, who planned to reduce imports, prevent capital from leaving the country, attract foreign investment and root out corruption. Almost before his policies had begun, the economic situation quickly improved. The world oil price recovered, devaluation made foreign imports too expensive, and this provided a boost for Russian industry. The government could afford to pay the arrears of wages and pensions, and the crisis passed. Opinion polls showed that 70 per cent of the voters approved of Primakov's policies. After only eight months, however, Yeltsin sacked him (May 1999), claiming that a younger and more energetic man was needed (Primakov was almost 70). It was rumoured that the real reason was Primakov's determination to eradicate corruption; many influential people who had gained their wealth and power by corrupt means put pressure on Yeltsin to dismiss Primakov. However, his dismissal caused consternation among ordinary Russians and Yeltsin's popularity rating fell to only 2 per cent. Yet Yeltsin's regime was certainly not a complete failure. By his programme of privatizations and allowing what passed for competitive elections, he had laid the foundations of a new Russian-style capitalism for the twenty-first century. Certainly in the eyes of the US Clinton administration, he had done as well as could be expected in such a rapid transition from communism to capitalism.

(f) Enter Putin

In preparation for the *Duma* election set for December 1999 and the next presidential election (June 2000), Yeltsin appointed as prime minister Vladimir Putin, the director of the

security police, and a former KGB leader. The constitution prevented Yeltsin from standing for a third term, so he wanted to make sure that the candidate of his choice became next president. If a president were to retire before the end of his term, the constitution stipulated that the prime minister would automatically become president for three months, during which time presidential elections must be held. Opinion polls suggested that Primakov might well be elected next president, but events in September 1999 changed the situation dramatically. There was a series of bomb explosions in Moscow; two large apartment blocks were blown up and over 200 people killed. Putin claimed that the Chechen rebels were responsible and he ordered an all-out attack on the Chechen separatists. This time public opinion, outraged by the bomb attacks, was in favour of the war. Putin impressed people by his decisive handling of the situation and his determination to wipe out the warlords.

The renewed war in Chechnya worked in favour of Putin and his party – the Unity bloc. In the *Duma* elections Primakov's supporters won only 12 per cent of the seats, Putin's Unity bloc 24 per cent and the communists 25 per cent. On 31 December 1999 Yeltsin resigned as president, confident that his candidate, Putin, would be next president. As acting president Putin immediately pulled off a master stroke: his Unity bloc formed an alliance in the *Duma* with the communists and a few other smaller groups, giving the pro-Putin bloc a majority, something which Yeltsin had never achieved. In the presidential election held in March 2000, Putin won outright on the first ballot, taking 53 per cent of the votes; once again Zyuganov came second.

(g) Putin's first term, 2000–4

Putin had a reputation for political acumen and the ability to get things done. He was determined to stamp out corruption – to destroy the oligarchs as a class, as he put it – to develop a strictly controlled market economy, to restore law and order and to bring an end to the war in Chechnya. He was able to get his new measures approved by the *Duma* thanks to the continuing alliances formed after the December 1999 elections, and he achieved considerable success.

- Two of the most influential 'oligarchs', Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, who between them controlled most of Russia's television companies and had been critical of Putin, were both removed from their positions and threatened with arrest on corruption charges. Both men decided to leave the country, and state control over the television network was re-established. In 2003 a third business tycoon, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, once said to be the wealthiest man in Russia, was arrested and jailed.
- New regulations for political parties meant that no party with fewer than 10 000 members would be allowed to take part in national elections. This reduced the number of parties from 180 to about 100, and the great advantage for the government was that it would prevent wealthy oligarchs from financing their own groups of supporters. In October 2001, Putin scored another success when his Unity party merged with one of its largest rivals, the Fatherland movement; together they were set to become the majority group in the *Duma*.
- The economy continued to recover, production increased and Russia continued to benefit from the high world price of oil, though this began to fall at the end of 2001. The federal budget moved into surplus and the government was able to service its debts without any more borrowing. Putin felt that the recovery was still precarious and he continued with more economic liberalization policies.

- In contrast to the Yeltsin presidency, Putin cultivated a 'strong-man' image. He was firm and authoritative, and he could be ruthless if the situation required it. As a precaution, the budget of the secret police (the FSB – successor to the KGB) was trebled, and an increasing number of important positions in the government administration apparatus were filled by people with a background in the security services.

Putin also had less successful experiences. When the nuclear submarine *Kursk* sank mysteriously in the Barentz Sea with the loss of all 118 crew members (August 2000), the government came under criticism for its unimpressive handling of the tragedy. Putin failed to bring a decisive end to the conflict in Chechnya, and terrorist bomb outrages continued. In October 2002 a group of between 40 and 50 armed and masked Chechens occupied the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow, and took some 850 members of the audience hostage. They demanded the withdrawal of all Russian troops from Chechnya and an end to the Second Chechen War. After two and a half days, neither side would make any concessions, so government troops pumped noxious gas into the theatre through the ventilation system and then launched an attack. They killed 39 of the rebels, but unfortunately 129 hostages were also killed, most of them by the toxic gas. Again the government came under criticism for its handling of the crisis, especially from doctors. They claimed that they would have been able to save more of the hostages if the government had not refused to disclose the name of the gas used. To make matters worse, estimates published in the summer of 2003 suggested that one-third of the population were still living below the poverty line.

However, Putin's personal popularity remained high among the general public, enabling him to face the elections of 2003–4 with confidence. He had achieved a great deal for the Russian people, especially through his tax and pensions reforms. Most people were delighted with his attacks on the 'oligarchs', the economy was flourishing and foreign investors were showing interest in Russia again.

It was no surprise when in the *Duma* elections of December 2003, Putin's United Russia party won a massive 222 seats out of the 450. The real surprise was the poor showing of Zyuganov's Communist Party, which lost almost half its MPs and was left with only 53 seats. Some observers believed that this marked the end of the road for the communists, who had provided the only real political opposition to the government. One reason for the communists' poor showing was the creation of a new party – *Rodina* (Motherland) – only four months before the elections. This was a nationalist party pledged to raise company taxation and return to ordinary people the fortunes made by the oligarchs in their shady privatization deals. *Rodina* took most of its votes from the communists and ended up with 37 MPs, who would vote for Putin.

Analysts pointed out that Putin was developing distinct authoritarian tendencies: *Rodina* had been deliberately founded by the Kremlin in the hope of taking support away from the communists, as part of Putin's strategy for 'controlled democracy'. In other words, he was trying to create a parliament 'in his own image'. If he could secure a two-thirds majority in the *Duma*, he would be able to change the constitution to allow himself a third term as president. Clearly democracy in Russia was in the balance.

In the presidential election of March 2004, President Putin won a sweeping victory, taking 71 per cent of the votes cast. His nearest rival was the Communist candidate, Nikolai Kharitonov, but he gained only 13.7 per cent. Observers from the Council of Europe reported that the election had failed to meet healthy democratic standards. In particular, it was alleged that rival candidates had not been allowed fair access to the state-controlled media, and that there had been no genuine pre-election political debate. However, President Putin dismissed these criticisms; he promised to press ahead with economic reform and to safeguard democracy.

(h) Putin's second term, 2004–8

There was a tragic early reminder of the Chechen situation when, on 1 September 2004, the traditional start of the Russian school year, a group of heavily-armed Chechen guerrillas occupied a school in the town of Beslan, in North Ossetia, and took around 1100 children and adults hostage. They demanded an end to the Second Chechen War and the complete withdrawal of all Russian troops from Chechnya. After three days Russian security forces stormed the building, using tanks and rockets. This soon ended the crisis, but not before over 300 people had been killed, including 186 children. The government was criticized for its handling of the situation on the grounds that excessive force was used. Alexander Litvinenko, a former member of the KGB, claimed that it was an 'inside job', that the security services had organized the hostage-taking to keep public opinion anti-Chechen and to justify stricter security measures. Soon afterwards Putin introduced tougher anti-terrorist laws and increased the powers of the security forces. In June 2006 the Duma passed a new law which gave the FSB (successor to the KGB) authority to send commandos abroad to assassinate 'terrorist groups'; this power was to be used only at the discretion of the president.

Litvinenko had a history of criticizing the government and the security services: in 1998 he accused FSB bosses of ordering the murder of the oligarch Boris Berezovsky. This led to Litvinenko's arrest on charges of 'exceeding his authority'. The charges were dropped, but in 2000 he took refuge in the UK where he worked as a journalist and acted as a 'consultant' for the British intelligence services. In 2002 he published a book in which he accused the FSB of organizing the series of terrorist attacks that were blamed on the Chechens, in order to justify the Second Chechen War and bring Putin to power. This was dangerous stuff, and his comments on the Beslan crisis proved to be the final straw. In November 2006 Litvinenko was killed in London by a rare radioactive poison, Polonium 210. Investigations suggested that the poison had been administered by Andrey Lugovoy, a Russian security agent, who was charged with the murder. The UK authorities requested his extradition from Russia, but this was refused. Although the UK government did not directly blame the Russian government, there was a clear inference that the murder was indeed sponsored by the Russian state. In 2007 another Russian exile, Alex Goldfarb, with the collaboration of Litvinenko's widow, Marina, published a book containing compelling evidence that Putin himself must have ordered the murder. Nor was this the first time a critic of the Putin regime had been murdered. A few weeks earlier, in October 2006, Anna Politskovskaya, a journalist and writer, was shot dead in the lift of her apartment block. She had been a long-time critic of the Chechen War, and in 2004 had published a book, *Putin's Russia,* in which she claimed that Russia still had elements of the police state, or mafia state. On the more positive side, as Putin began his second term as president, *the economic situation was looking bright*. Oil prices were rising: around £28 a barrel in 2000, they now stood at £40 a barrel, and by the end of 2006 they had reached over £60. By this time Russia was the largest producer of gas in the world, and the second largest exporter of oil after Saudi Arabia. As Europe becomes more dependent on fuel supplies from Russia, this could well strengthen Moscow's influence and leverage. *The economy had grown steadily by over 6 per cent a year since Putin became president in 2000.* Another contributor to the success story was the software-manufacturing industry: in 2006 exports of software were worth $1.5 billion as opposed to only £128 million in 2001. This success was encouraging more foreign investment. There were plans to use some of the increased revenue to improve living standards. In 2005 the National Priority Projects were announced, designed to improve the health system, education, housing and agriculture, including wage increases for health workers and teachers.

However, Putin decided to use much of the cash to build up a large reserve fund to protect against a fall in oil prices. This meant less government investment and stagnation

in the economic reform programme. To make matters worse, Russia was hard-hit by the 2008–9 world financial crisis, which cut off the flow of cheap credit and investment from the West. Fortunately Putin's $90-billion reserve fund helped Russia to cope, and by the end of 2009 the economy was growing again. On the downside, the National Priority Projects suffered. Under the Soviet system, universities and academies were well financed, as were the arts – orchestras, theatres, film studios and publishers. Admittedly, there was a price to pay in the form of strict censorship, but following the 1998 economic crisis, this funding had been drastically reduced – for example, the budget for higher education had been slashed to only 12 per cent of the 1989 level. By 2008, in spite of its promises, the government had largely failed to reverse these cuts. Average wages of lecturers and teachers were only two-thirds of the national rate. Even the Ministry of Education reported that only 20 per cent of institutions of higher education had retained the high standards that were the norm under the Soviet system. The state now provides less than a third of their funding. The same is true of the health service: although this is still free, the care is far inferior to that provided under the communists. To get the best and quickest treatment, patients must pay. Probably worst affected are the elderly; although prices have rocketed, pensions have not increased. In most Russian towns and cities, old people can be seen on street corners trying to sell bits of produce, fruit and vegetables, as they struggle to make ends meet. Understandably, many ordinary Russians look back on post-Stalinist Soviet times with nostalgia, in spite of its drawbacks.

During 2007 there were a number of protest demonstrations, known as Dissenters' Marches, in Moscow, St Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Samara, but later demonstrations were met by police, and overt public support soon dwindled. Although by the end of 2008 there was much hostility to the Putin regime, most of it was in private, and there was very little public criticism. This was partly because the government kept tight control of the media, and journalists and writers were afraid of meeting the same fate as Anna Politskovskaya and Alexander Litvinenko. There was another reason too: according to Perry Anderson:

> it is the knowledge, which can only be half-repressed, that the liberal intelligentsia is compromised by its own part in bringing to being what it now so dislikes. By clinging to Yeltsin long after the illegality and corruption of his rule were plain, in the name of defence against a toothless Communism, it destroyed its credibility in the eyes of the population, only to find that Yeltsin had landed it with Putin.

The constitution did not allow Putin to stand for a third consecutive term, so he chose his close friend and ally, Dmitri Medvedev, as the United Russia presidential candidate. Before the election, Medvedev announced that if he won, he would choose Putin as his prime minister. Their election slogan was 'Together We Win'. In March 2008 Medvedev won a sweeping victory, taking around 70 per cent of the popular vote. His nearest rival, the Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, received just under 18 per cent. In spite of the dissatisfaction with falling living standards, it seemed that Putin's personal popularity was still sufficient to win elections. Whatever his faults, he and his United Russia party were still more attractive than any of the alternatives.

(i) Putin and Medvedev, 2008–12

The day after he became president in May 2008, Medvedev duly appointed Putin as prime minister. The State Duma approved the appointment by 392 votes to 56; only the communists voted against. Clearly Putin would continue to be extremely influential, and journalists soon labelled the new government the 'tandemocracy'. They were soon faced with a

crisis – *The South Ossetia War.* When the USSR broke up, Georgia became independent. But South Ossetia and Abkhazia soon declared themselves independent of Georgia, and were supported by Russia. Georgia refused to accept this, and the conflict dragged on. In August 2008 Georgian troops suddenly invaded South Ossetia. Medvedev reacted swiftly – Russian forces counter-attacked and after five days of heavy fighting, the Georgians were driven out. Russia officially recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. Medvedev's decisive handling of the crisis was popular with most Russians, though the Western media, especially in the USA, sided with Georgia. Towards the end of 2008 Russia began to feel the effects of the world financial crisis. Fortunately the government was able to use the large surplus accumulated earlier to bail out any banks that were in difficulties, and to help struggling companies with generous loans. Even so GDP fell by around 10 per cent in 2009, and the economy only began to move forward again in 2010. The reserve fund had been emptied and this delayed various reform and modernization programmes. Medvedev's main aim was to reduce Russia's dependence on income from oil and gas exports by diversifying into nuclear technology and pharmaceuticals, and by further developing information technology and software production. In January 2011 Medvedev admitted that one of his other key policies – to eliminate corruption – had so far been a failure. As the time approached for the next Duma and presidential elections, there was great speculation as to whether Medvedev would stand for re-election or step down in favour of Putin. There had been rumours of a breach between the two. However, in September 2011, Medvedev announced that he would not stand again and he officially proposed Vladimir Putin as the United Russia party candidate. In the Duma elections held on 4 December 2011, United Russia suffered something of a setback. Their share of the vote was below 50 per cent for the first time; it actually fell from 64 per cent in 2007 to 49 per cent, and the party lost 77 seats, down from 315 to 238, out of a total of 450. The Communists took 37 of these seats, going up from 57 to 92. Of the two smaller parties, Just Russia won 64 seats and the Liberal Democrats 56. Putin and Medvedev's party had lost their two-thirds majority, although they still had a small overall majority. The election was followed by protest demonstrations in Moscow and St Petersburg claiming widespread electoral fraud and demanding annulment of the results. These were followed by even larger demonstrations in support of the government. In March 2012 the presidential election brought a decisive victory for Putin, who took 63 per cent of the votes, against 17 per cent for Gennady Zyuganov, the Communist leader, who came second of the five candidates. On 7 May 2012, Vladimir Putin was inaugurated as president for the third time. Although there were more protests about irregularities at polling stations, there could be no doubt that Putin was still remarkably popular. He defended what he called his 'managed democracy' on the grounds that this was the most suitable type of democracy for Russia, because the country had no history of Western-style democracy. And a majority of people evidently agreed. Putin was set to continue in power, either as president or as prime minister, for the foreseeable future. No matter what the state of the nation, and in spite of numerous protest demonstrations, he seemed to be unassailable.

FURTHER READING

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Chapter

17 China, 1900–49

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

China had a long history of national unity and since the mid-seventeenth century had been ruled by the Manchu or Ch'ing dynasty. However, during the 1840s, the country moved into a troubled period of foreign interference, civil war and disintegration, which lasted until the communist victory in 1949.

The last emperor was overthrown in 1911 and a republic was proclaimed. The period 1916 to 1928, known as *the Warlord Era*, was one of great chaos, as a number of generals seized control of different provinces. A party known as the *Kuomintang (KMT)*, or Nationalists, was trying to govern China and control the generals, who were busy fighting each other. The KMT leaders were Dr Sun Yat-sen, and after his death in 1925, General Chiang Kai-shek. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921, and at first it co-operated with the KMT in its struggle against the warlords. As the KMT gradually established control over more and more of China, it felt strong enough to do without the help of the communists, and it tried to destroy them. The communists, under their leader Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), reacted vigorously, and after escaping from surrounding KMT forces, they embarked on the 6000-mile Long March (1934–5) to form a new power base in northern China.

Civil war dragged on, complicated by Japanese interference, which culminated in a full-scale invasion in 1937. When the Second World War ended in defeat for the Japanese and their withdrawal from China, the KMT and the CCP continued to fight each other for control of China. Chiang Kai-shek received help from the USA, but in 1949 it was Mao and the communists who finally triumphed. Chiang and his supporters fled to the island of Taiwan (Formosa). Mao Zedong quickly established control over the whole of China, and he remained leader until his death in 1976.

17.1 REVOLUTION AND THE WARLORD ERA

(a) Background to the revolution of 1911

In the early part of the nineteenth century China kept itself very much separate from the rest of the world; life went on quietly and peacefully with no great changes, as it had done since the Manchus took over in the 1640s. However, in the mid-nineteenth century China found itself faced by a number of crises. The prolonged period of relative peace had led to a rapid increase in the population – between 1741 and 1841 the population rose from 140 million to 410 million. This made it difficult to produce enough food for subsistence, forcing many peasants to turn to robbery and banditry as a means of survival. The ensuing chaos encouraged foreigners, especially Europeans, *to force their way into China* to take advantage of trading possibilities. The British were first on the scene, fighting and

defeating the Chinese in the Opium Wars (1839–42). They forced China to hand over Hong Kong and to allow them to trade at certain ports. Other western nations followed, and eventually these 'barbarians', as the Chinese regarded them, had rights and concessions in about 80 ports and other towns.

Next came *the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64)*, which spread all over southern China. It was partly a Christian religious movement and partly a political reform movement, which aimed to set up a 'Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace' (*Taiping tianguo*). The movement was eventually defeated, not by the Manchu government troops, which proved to be ineffective, but by newly formed regional armies. The failure of the government forces was a serious blow to the authority of the Ch'ing dynasty. It left them dependent on regional armies that they did not control. This began the process in which provinces began to assert their independence from the central government in Beijing (Peking), culminating in the Warlord Era (1916–28).

China was defeated in a war with Japan (1894–5) and forced to hand over territory, including the large island of Formosa. By the end of 1898 Britain, Germany, France and Russia had leased large areas of land from the Chinese government which they proceeded to treat as if they were no longer Chinese territory. There was a story in circulation that outside a British-run park in Shanghai, there was a sign reading NO DOGS OR CHINESE. The sign never actually existed, but the story showed the outrage felt by ordinary Chinese people at the intrusive foreign presence in their country. A Chinese uprising – *the Boxer Rising* – against foreign influence took place in 1898–1900, but it was defeated by an international army, and the Empress Tz'u-hsi was forced to pay massive compensation for damage done to foreign property in China. More territory was lost to Japan as a result of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), and China was clearly in a sorry state.

In the early years of the twentieth century, thousands of young Chinese travelled abroad and were educated there. They returned with radical, revolutionary ideas of overthrowing the Manchu dynasty and westernizing China. Some revolutionaries, like Dr Sun Yat-sen, wanted a democratic state modelled on the USA.

(b) The 1911 revolution and the twenty-one demands (1915)

The government tried to respond to the new radical ideas by introducing reforms, promising democracy and setting up elected provincial assemblies. However, this only encouraged the provinces to distance themselves still further from the central government, which was now extremely unpopular. *The revolution began among soldiers in Wuchang in October 1911, and most provinces quickly declared themselves independent of Beijing*.

The government, ruling on behalf of the child emperor Puyi (who was only five years old), in desperation sought help from a retired general, Yuan Shikai, who had been commander of the Chinese Northern Army, and still had a lot of influence with the generals. However, the plan backfired: Yuan, who was still only in his early fifties, turned out to have ambitions of his own. He did a deal with the revolutionaries – they agreed to his becoming the first president of the Chinese republic in return for the abdication of Puyi and the end of the Manchu dynasty. With the support of the army, Yuan ruled as a military dictator from 1912 until 1915.

Meanwhile the Japanese sought to take advantage of the upheaval in China and the outbreak of the First World War. A few days after the war began they demanded that Germany should hand over all their rights in the Chinese Shantung peninsula to Japan. This was followed up in January 1915 by *Japan's Twenty-One Demands to China.* These were divided into five groups. First they wanted Chinese approval of Japan's concessions in Shantung (seized from the Germans), including the right to build railways and to begin new mines; similar rights in south Manchuria; in Hanyehping, the right to continue developing the coal mines at Wuhan; similar rights in Fukien province; and

finally the demand that China should accept Japanese 'advisers' in political, economic and military matters, and must allow the police forces in some large cities to be jointly organized by Japanese and Chinese. As soon as the demands became public, there was a wave of anti-Japanese feeling and a boycott of Japanese goods. Yuan delayed accepting the demands until the Japanese eventually agreed to drop the final group. An agreement accepting the rest was signed on 25 May 1915. In fact the agreement made very little difference to the situation: it simply restated the concessions that Japan already had. It was group five of the demands that revealed Japan's motives. Acceptance of those would have reduced China almost to a colony or a protectorate of Japan. However, Japan had another strategy in mind: they knew that Yuan had developed a desire to become emperor, and in return for his acceptance of the demands, they secretly promised that they would support him in his ambitions. A new emperor who owed his position to Japanese support would be an excellent alternative method of controlling China. In December 1915 it was announced that there was to be a return to the monarchy in the person of Yuan himself, who would become emperor on 1 January 1916. This turned out to be a fatal mistake: most people saw the ending of the new republic as a backward step, and his support dwindled rapidly. The army turned against him and forced him to abdicate. He died in October 1916.

(c) The warlord era (1916–28)

The abdication and death of Yuan Shikai removed the last person who seemed capable of maintaining some sort of unity in China. The country now disintegrated into literally hundreds of states of varying sizes, each controlled by a warlord and his private army. As they fought each other, it was the ordinary Chinese peasants who suffered untold hardships. However, *two important positive developments took place during this period*.

- The May the Fourth Movement began on that date in 1919 with a huge student demonstration in Beijing, protesting against the warlords and against traditional Chinese culture. The movement was also anti-Japanese, especially when the 1919 Versailles settlement officially recognized Japan's right to take over Germany's concessions in Shantung province. It was this humiliation at the hands of Japan that seemed to stir up the whole country to support the movement. Thousands of university students went on strike at the failure of the government to protest strongly enough at Versailles. Once again there was a boycott of Japanese goods. This was popular with Chinese industrialists, who benefited from the boycott; they supported the students, many of whom had been jailed, while factory workers and railway workers went on strike in sympathy. It was a remarkable show of mass patriotism. The government finally had no choice but to give way: the students were released; the ministers who had signed the Twenty-One Demands agreement in 1915 were sacked, and the Chinese delegation at Versailles refused to sign the peace treaty.
- The other problems addressed by May the Fourth Movement – the need to tame the warlords, and the desire to modernize Chinese culture – took longer to achieve. However, as the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party gradually grew stronger, they succeeded in bringing the warlords under control by 1928. Chinese culture was partly based on the teachings of the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, who died in 478 BC. He had developed his philosophy during a period of anarchy in China and it was designed to solve the problems of how best to organize society so that all could live together in peace. He stressed the necessity for loyalty in all relationships and

for the strict upbringing of children. 'Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, and a son a son'. If people acted properly according to their place in society, then the moral integrity and social harmony of the nation would be restored. For centuries Chinese emperors and rulers had embraced Confucianism because it justified their autocratic and conservative rule. After the 1911 revolution and May the Fourth 1919, some writers began to produce questioning and challenging works calling for modernization in politics, science and individual rights in place of traditional Confucianism. But the practical effect of these writings was limited; the warlords were totally unmoved by this new thinking, and Chiang's Nationalists suppressed intellectual and political freedom after they had set up their government in Nanjing in the late 1920s. They even promoted Confucianism because of its conservatism and because it was a good means of distinguishing themselves from Mao and the communists. It was not until the student protests of 1989 that the May the Fourth ideas surfaced again.

17.2 THE KUOMINTANG, DR SUN YAT-SEN AND CHIANG KAI-SHEK

(a) The Kuomintang

The main hope for the survival of a united China lay with the Kuomintang, or National People's Party, formed in 1912 by Dr Sun Yat-sen. He had trained as a doctor in Hawaii and Hong Kong and lived abroad until the 1911 revolution. He was dismayed by the disintegration of China and wanted to create a modern, united, democratic state. Returning to China after the revolution, he succeeded in setting up a government at Canton in southern China (1917). His ideas were influential but he had very little power outside the Canton area. The KMT was not a communist party, though it was prepared to co-operate with the communists, and developed its own party organization along communist lines, as well as building up its own army. Sun himself summarized his aims as *the Three Principles*:

nationalism – to rid China of foreign influence and build the country into a strong and united power, respected abroad.
democracy – China should not be ruled by warlords, but by the people themselves, after they had been educated to equip them for democratic self-government.
land reform – sometimes known as 'the people's livelihood'; this was vague – although Sun announced a long-term policy of economic development and redistribution of land to the peasants and was in favour of rent restraint, he was opposed to the confiscation of landlords' property.

Sun gained enormous respect as an intellectual statesman and revolutionary leader, but when he died in 1925 little progress had been made towards achieving the three principles, mainly because he was not himself a general. Until the KMT armies were built up, he had to rely on alliances with sympathetic warlords, and he had difficulty exercising any authority outside the south.

(b) Chiang Kai-shek

General Chiang Kai-shek became leader of the KMT after Sun's death. He had received his military training in Japan before the First World War, and being a strong nationalist, joined the KMT. At this stage the new Russian Soviet government was providing help and guidance for the KMT in the hope that Nationalist China would be friendly

towards Russia. In 1923 Chiang spent some time in Moscow studying the organization of the Communist Party and the Red Army. The following year he became head of the Whampoa Military Academy (near Canton), which was set up with the help of Russian cash, arms and advisers to train officers for the KMT army. However, in spite of his Russian contacts, Chiang was not a communist. In fact he was more right-wing than Sun Yat-sen and became increasingly anti-communist, his sympathies lying with businessmen and landowners. Soon after becoming party leader, he removed all left-wingers from leading positions in the Party, though for the time being he continued the KMT alliance with the communists.

In 1926 he set out on *the Northern March* to destroy the warlords of central and northern China. Starting from Canton, the KMT and the communists had captured Hankow, Shanghai and Nanking by 1927. The capital, Beijing, was taken in 1928. Much of Chiang's success sprang from massive local support among the peasants, who were attracted by communist promises of land. The capture of Shanghai was helped by a rising of industrial workers organized by *Zhou En-lai*, a member of the KMT and also a communist.

During 1927 Chiang decided that the communists were becoming too powerful. In areas where communists were strong, landlords were being attacked and land seized; it was time to destroy an embarrassing ally. All communists were expelled from the KMT and a terrible 'purification movement' was launched in which thousands of communists, trade union and peasant leaders were massacred; some estimates put the total murdered as high as 250 000. The communists had been checked, the warlords were under control and Chiang was the military and political leader of China.

The Kuomintang government proved to be a great disappointment for the majority of the Chinese people. Chiang could claim to have achieved Sun's first principle, nationalism, but relying as he did on the support of wealthy landowners, no moves were made towards democracy or land reform, though there was some limited progress with the building of more schools and roads.

17.3 MAO ZEDONG AND THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

(a) The early years

The party had been officially founded in 1921; at first it consisted mostly of intellectuals and had very little military strength, which explains why it was willing to work with the KMT. Mao Zedong, who was present at the founding meeting, was born in Hunan province (1893) in south-east China, the son of a prosperous peasant farmer. After spending some time working on the land, Mao trained as a teacher, and then moved northwards to Beijing where he worked as a library assistant at the university, a centre of Marxist studies. Later he moved back to Hunan and built up a reputation as a skilful trade union and peasant association organizer. After the communist breach with the KMT, Mao was responsible for changing the Party's strategy: they would concentrate on winning mass support among the peasants rather than trying to capture industrial towns, where several communist insurrections had already failed because of the strength of the KMT. In 1931 Mao was elected chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Party, and from then on, he gradually consolidated his position as the real leader of Chinese communism. The Chinese Soviet Republic was proclaimed at Juichin in 1931, and on 7 November 1931 the first All-China Congress of Soviets was held there. It was attended by delegates from 15 soviet areas.

Mao and his supporters spent most of their energies on survival as Chiang carried out five 'extermination campaigns' against them between 1930 and 1934. They took to the

mountains between Hunan and Kiangsi provinces and concentrated on building up the Red Army. However, early in 1934 Mao's base area was surrounded by KMT armies poised for the final destruction of Chinese communism. Mao decided that the only chance of survival was to break through Chiang's lines and set up another power base somewhere else. In October 1934 the breakthrough was achieved and almost 100 000 communists set out on the remarkable *Long March*, which was to become part of Chinese legend. They covered about 6000 miles in 368 days (see Map 17.1) and, in the words of American journalist Edgar Snow:

> crossed 18 mountain ranges, 5 of which were snow-capped, and 24 rivers. They passed through 12 different provinces, occupied 62 cities, and broke through enveloping armies of 10 different provincial warlords, besides defeating, eluding, or out-manoeuvring the various forces of government troops sent against them.

Eventually the 20 000 survivors found refuge at Yenan in Shensi province: this was the last surviving communist base in China and was controlled by the guerrilla leader Kao Kang. The Shensi communists, not entirely willingly, accepted Mao as leader, and a new base and a soviet were organized. Mao was able to control the provinces of Shensi and Kansu. However, according to writers Jung Chang and Jon Halliday in their book *Mao: The Unknown Story,* published in 2005, the march was vastly exaggerated and was in fact nothing like as heroic as legend claimed. They even suggested that Mao's 'breakout' in October 1934 was actually permitted by Chiang Kai-shek because he preferred the communists to be in the north where he could box them in while he extended the KMT control over the south-west. This interpretation was welcomed by Mao's critics, but historians generally gave a more balanced judgement: while agreeing that there had been some exaggeration in accounts of the march in order to show Mao and the communists in the best possible light, they rejected the Jung Chang/Halliday interpretation as 'more fantasy than fact'. *During the ten years following the Long March the communists continued to gain support*, *while Chiang and the KMT steadily lost popularity*.

(b) Why did Mao and the communists gain support?

1 The inefficiency and corruption of the KMT in government

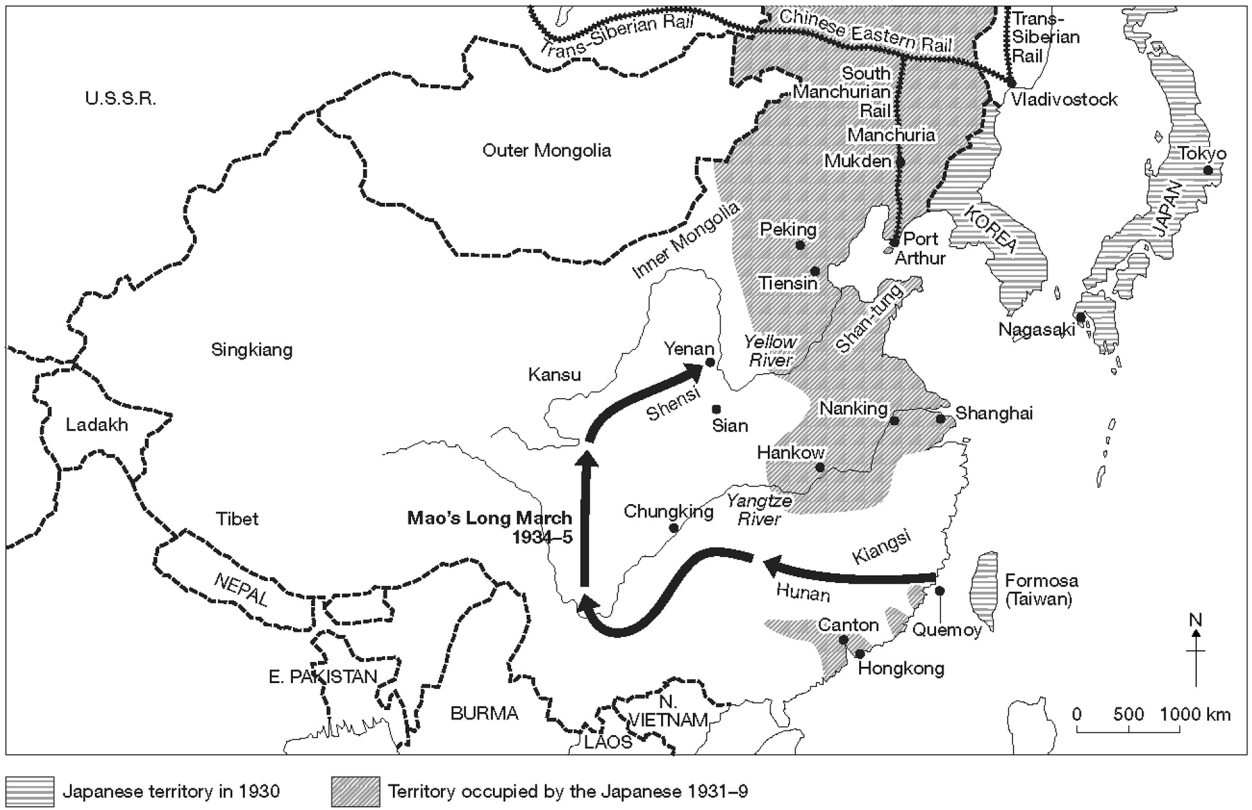
The KMT had little to offer in the way of reform, spent too much time looking after the interests of industrialists, bankers and landowners, and made no effective attempts to organize mass support. This provided the main opportunity for Mao and the communists to win support.

2 There was little improvement in factory conditions

Poor industrial working conditions continued, in spite of laws designed to remove the worst abuses, such as child labour in textile mills. Often these laws were not applied: there was widespread bribery of inspectors and Chiang himself was not prepared to offend his industrial supporters.

3 There was no improvement in peasant poverty

In the early 1930s there was a series of droughts and bad harvests which caused widespread famine in rural areas. At the same time there was usually plenty of rice and wheat being hoarded in the cities by profiteering merchants. In addition there were high taxes and



Map 17.1 **China after the First World War**

forced labour. In contrast, the land policy followed in areas controlled by the communists was much more attractive: at first in the south, they seized the estates of rich landlords and redistributed them among the peasants. After the temporary truce with the KMT during the war with Japan, the communists compromised, and confined themselves to a policy of restricting rents and making sure that even the poorest labourers got a small piece of land. This less drastic policy had the advantage of winning the support of the smaller landowners, as well as the peasants.

4 Chiang's 'New Life Movement' was controversial

In the early 1930s Chiang began to advocate a return to the traditional values of Confucianism, the traditional Chinese religion. In 1934 he introduced the New Life Movement which, he claimed, was a unique secular, rational and modern Chinese version of Confucianism. It was meant to mobilize the population and to revive the country's 'innate morality', thereby helping to create a healthy society and a strong and united country. However, in the words of historian Rana Mitter: 'The movement was not ultimately successful, as its formal prescriptions, including not spitting in the street, and queuing up in an orderly fashion, came over as trivial in comparison with the much larger issues of national coherence which dogged twentieth-century China'. Unfortunately many May the Fourth supporters and other modern progressive thinkers protested that this was another backward step designed to return China to its oppressive imperial past.

5 The KMT put up no effective resistance to the Japanese

This was the crucial factor in the communist success. The Japanese occupied Manchuria in 1931 and were obviously preparing to bring the neighbouring provinces of northern China under their control. Chiang seemed to think it was more important to destroy the communists than to resist the Japanese, and moved into south Shensi to attack Mao (1936). Here a remarkable incident took place: Chiang was taken prisoner by some of his own troops, mostly Manchurians, who were incensed at the Japanese invasion. They demanded that Chiang should turn against the Japanese, but at first he was unwilling. Only after the prominent communist Zhou En-lai came to see him at Sian did he agree to a fresh alliance with the CCP and a national front against the Japanese.

The new alliance brought great advantages for the communists: the KMT extermination campaigns ceased for the time being and consequently the CCP was secure in its Shensi base. When full-scale war broke out with Japan in 1937, the KMT forces were quickly defeated and most of eastern China was occupied by the Japanese as Chiang retreated westwards. This enabled the communists, undefeated in Shensi, to present themselves as patriotic nationalists, leading an effective guerrilla campaign against the Japanese in the north. This won them massive support among the peasants and middle classes, who were appalled at Japanese arrogance and brutality. Whereas in 1937 the CCP had five base areas controlling 12 million people, by 1945 this had grown to 19 base areas controlling 100 million people.

However, a recent biographer of Chiang Kai-shek, Jay Taylor, has suggested that he deserves more credit than the Americans and British have given him. For example, the American General Stilwell used to refer to him as 'Peanut', while the British Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke described him as 'a cross between a pine-marten and a ferret'. Without trying to ignore Chiang's brutality and his mistakes, Taylor argues that, given the enormity of the problems facing him, he governed the country with reasonable skill and certainly understood the challenges facing him far better than his American advisers did.

17.4 THE COMMUNIST VICTORY, 1949

(a) China and the Second World War

When the war began, Chiang Kai-shek was in a dilemma: China had already been in a state of undeclared war with Japan since 1937, yet he had great admiration for Japan's ally Germany, and for the German military tradition. It was only after the German defeat at Stalingrad in 1942–3 that he decided to commit China to the Allied side. However, relations between China and the USSR were strained because of Chiang's campaigns against the communists, so that Stalin refused to take part in any meeting at which Chiang was present. As an encouragement, in January 1943 the USA, Britain and several other states renounced their territorial rights and concessions in China (though Britain insisted on keeping Hong Kong), and promised that Manchuria and Formosa would be returned to China after the war. The irony was that most of these territories were occupied by the Japanese at the time – unless Japan could be defeated, none of it would happen. Nevertheless the agreements were important because they showed that at last China was being treated as an equal among the great powers, and was promised a permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations.

The Japanese reaction to these developments was to launch an offensive by troops moved from Manchuria. Striking southwards from the Yangtse Valley, they eventually reached the frontier with Indochina, cutting off the south-east coast from the interior. The Nationalist forces were disorganized and ineffective, and their sporadic attempts to repel the Japanese advance were swept aside. Fortunately for the Chinese, time was running out for the Japanese in other areas. In August 1945 the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and within a few days Japan surrendered. The Chinese contribution to the defeat of Japan had been to keep hundreds of thousands of Japanese troops bogged down in what was, for them, only a sideshow.

(b) Victory for the communists was still not inevitable

When the Japanese were defeated in 1945, the KMT and the CCP became locked in the final struggle for power. Many observers, especially in the USA, hoped and expected that Chiang would be victorious. The Americans helped the KMT to take over all areas previously occupied by the Japanese, except Manchuria, which had been captured by the Russians a few days before the war ended. Here the Russians obstructed the KMT and allowed CCP guerrillas to move in. In fact the apparent strength of the KMT was deceptive: in 1948 the ever-growing communist armies were large enough to abandon their guerrilla campaign and challenge Chiang's armies directly. As soon as they came under direct pressure, the KMT armies began to disintegrate. In January 1949 the communists took Beijing, and later in the year, Chiang and what remained of his forces fled to the island of Taiwan, leaving Mao Zedong in command of mainland China. In October 1949, standing at Tiananmen (the Gate of Heavenly Peace) in Beijing, Mao proclaimed the new People's Republic of China with himself as both Chairman of the CCP and president of the republic.

(c) Reasons for the CCP triumph

The communists continued to win popular support by their restrained land policy, which varied according to the needs of particular areas: some or all of a landlord's estate might be confiscated and redistributed among the peasants, or there might simply be rent

restriction; communist armies were well disciplined and communist administration was honest and fair.

On the other hand the KMT administration was inefficient and corrupt, much of its American aid finding its way into the pockets of officials. Its policy of paying for the wars by printing extra money resulted in galloping inflation, which caused hardship for the masses and ruined many of the middle class. Its armies were poorly paid and were allowed to loot the countryside; subjected to communist propaganda, the troops gradually became disillusioned with Chiang and began to desert to the communists. The KMT tried to terrorize the local populations into submission, but this only alienated more areas. Chiang also made some tactical blunders: like Hitler, he could not bear to order retreats and consequently his scattered armies were surrounded, and often, as happened at Beijing and Shanghai, surrendered without resistance, totally disillusioned.

Finally the CCP leaders, Mao Zedong and Zhou En-lai, were shrewd enough to take advantage of KMT weaknesses and were completely dedicated. The communist generals, Lin Biao, Chu Teh and Ch-en Yi, had prepared their armies carefully and were more competent tactically than their KMT counterparts.

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Chapter

18 China since 1949: The communists in control

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

After the communist victory over the Kuomintang in 1949, Mao Zedong set about rebuilding a shattered China. At first he received Russian advice and aid, but in the late 1950s relations cooled and Russian economic aid was reduced. In 1958 Mao introduced *the 'Great Leap Forward'*, in which communism was adapted – not altogether successfully – to meet the Chinese situation, with the emphasis on decentralization, agriculture, communes and contact with the masses. Mao became highly critical of the Russians, who, in his view, were straying from strict Marxist–Leninist principles and following the 'capitalist road' in both foreign and domestic affairs. During the 1960s these disagreements caused a serious rift in world communism, which was only healed after Mikhail Gorbachev became Russian leader in 1985. With *the Cultural Revolution (1966–9)*, Mao tried successfully to crush opposition within the Party and to keep China developing along Marxist–Leninist lines.

After Mao's death in 1976, there was a power struggle from which Deng Xiaoping emerged as undisputed leader (1981). Much less conservative than Mao, Deng was responsible for some important policy changes, moderating Mao's hardline communism and looking towards Japan and the capitalist West for ideas and help. This aroused resentment among the Maoist supporters, who accused Deng of straying along the 'capitalist road'; in 1987 they forced him to slow down the pace of his reforms.

Encouraged by Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy in the USSR, student protests began in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in April 1989, continuing through into June. They demanded democracy and an end to corruption in the Communist Party. On 3–4 June the army moved in, attacked the students, killing hundreds, and restored order. The communists had regained control. The economic reforms continued with some success, but there was no political reform. Deng Xiaoping continued as supreme leader until his death (at the age of 92) in 1997. The first few years of the new century saw more economic changes, including the opening up of the party to capitalists. By 2012, with the Communist Party still supreme, it seemed that China might soon supplant the USA as the world's most powerful nation.

18.1 HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS MAO IN DEALING WITH CHINA'S PROBLEMS?

(a) Problems facing Mao

The problems facing the People's Republic in 1949 were complex, to say the least. The country was devastated after the long civil war and the war with Japan: railways, roads, canals and dykes had been destroyed and there were chronic food shortages. Industry was

backward, agriculture was inefficient and incapable of feeding the poverty-stricken masses and inflation seemed out of control. Mao had the support of the peasants and many of the middle class, who were disgusted by the miserable performance of the Kuomintang, but it was essential for him to improve conditions if he were to hold on to their support. To control and organize such a vast country with a population of at least 600 million must have been a superhuman task. Yet Mao succeeded, and China today, whatever its faults, is still very much his creation. He began by looking closely at Stalin's methods and experimented, by a process of trial and error, to find which would work in China and where a special Chinese approach was necessary.

(b) The constitution of 1950 (officially adopted 1954)

This included the National People's Congress (the final authority for legislation), whose members were elected for four years by people over 18. There was also a State Council and the Chairman of the Republic (both elected by the Congress), whose function was to make sure that laws were carried out and that the administration of the country went ahead. The State Council chose the Political Bureau (Politburo), which took all the main decisions. The whole system was, of course, dominated by the Communist Party, and only party members could stand for election. The constitution was important because it provided China with a strong central government for the first time for many years, and it has remained largely unchanged (see Figure 18.1).

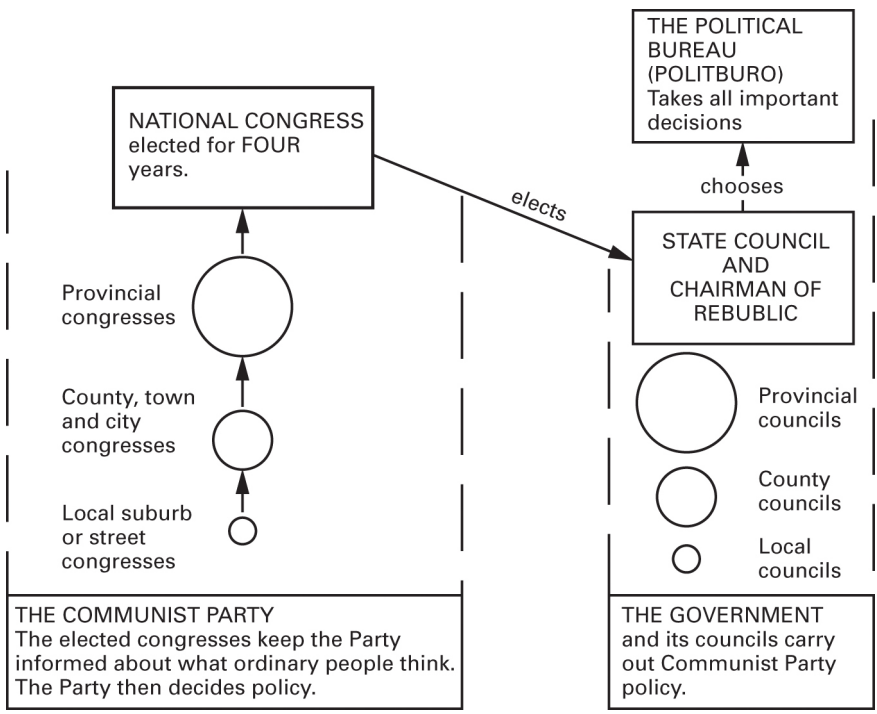
THE POLITICAL BUREAU (POLITBURO) Takes all important decisions
NATIONAL CONGRESS elected for FOUR years.
elects
chooses
STATE COUNCIL AND CHAIRMAN OF REBUBLIC
Provincial congresses
County, town and city congresses
Local suburb or street congresses
Provincial councils
County councils
Local councils
THE COMMUNIST PARTY
The elected congresses keep the Party informed about what ordinary people think. The Party then decides policy.
THE GOVERNMENT
and its councils carry out Communist Party policy.

Figure 18.1 **How the government of China works**

(c) Agricultural changes

These transformed China from a country of small, inefficient private farms into one of large co-operative farms like those in Russia (1950–6). In the first stage, land was taken from large landowners and redistributed among the peasants, no doubt with violence in places. Some sources mention as many as two million people killed, though historian Jack Gray, writing in 1970, when Mao was still alive, claimed that 'the redistribution of China's land was carried out with a remarkable degree of attention to legality and the minimum of physical violence against landlords'. Recently, however, during the atmosphere of goodwill and openness surrounding the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the Chinese authorities decided to declassify some secret archives and make them available for historians. These show that the official accounts of a number of events and policies do not tell the whole truth; achievements were exaggerated and unpleasant events were either toned down or not reported at all. Professor Frank Dikotter of the University of Hong Kong has shown that in some areas there were very few wealthy landowners, since the land was already fairly equally divided between the peasants. What actually happened was that their land was taken away from them and redistributed to communist party activists, with considerable violence, torturing and execution. One document from the Hebei archives reported that:

> When it comes to the ways in which people are killed, some are buried alive, some are executed, some are cut to pieces, and among those who are strangled or mangled to death, some of the bodies are hung from trees or doors.

By 1956, whatever the methods used, about 95 per cent of all surviving peasants were in collective farms with joint ownership of the farm and its equipment.

(d) Industrial changes

These began with the government nationalizing most businesses. In 1953 it embarked on a Five Year Plan concentrating on the development of heavy industry (iron, steel, chemicals and coal). The Russians helped with cash, equipment and advisers, and the plan had some success. Before it was complete, however, Mao began to have grave doubts as to whether China was suited to this sort of heavy industrialization. On the other hand he could claim that under his leadership the country had recovered from the ravages of the wars: full communications had been restored, inflation was under control and the economy was looking much healthier.

(e) The Hundred Flowers campaign (1957)

This seems to some extent to have developed out of industrialization, which produced a vast new class of technicians and engineers. The party *cadres* (groups who organized the masses politically and economically – the collectivization of the farms, for example, was carried out by the cadres) believed that this new class of experts would threaten their authority. The government, feeling pleased with its progress so far, decided that open discussion of the problems might improve relations between cadres and experts or intellectuals. 'Let a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend', said Mao, calling for constructive criticism. Unfortunately he got more than he had anticipated as critics attacked:

- the cadres for incompetence and over-enthusiasm;
- the government for over-centralization;

- the Communist Party for being undemocratic; some suggested that opposition parties should be allowed.

Mao hurriedly called off the campaign and clamped down on his critics, insisting that his policies were right. The campaign showed how much opposition there still was to communism and to the uneducated cadres, and it convinced Mao that a drive was needed to consolidate the advance of socialism; so in 1958 he called for the 'Great Leap Forward'.

(f) The Great Leap Forward

Mao felt that something new and different was needed to meet China's special problems – something not based on Russian experience. The Great Leap Forward involved further important developments in both industry and agriculture, in order to increase output (agriculture in particular was not providing the required food) and to adapt industry to Chinese conditions. Its most important features were:

- The introduction of communes. These were units larger than collective farms, containing up to 75000 people, divided into brigades and work teams with an elected council. They ran their own collective farms and factories, carried out most of the functions of local government within the commune and undertook special local projects. One typical commune in 1965, for example, contained 30 000 people, of which a third were children at school or in crèches, a third were housewives or elderly, and the rest were the workforce. This included a science team of 32 graduates and 43 technicians. Each family received a share of the profits and also had a small private plot of land.
- A complete change of emphasis in industry. Instead of aiming for large-scale works of the type seen in the USSR and the West, much smaller factories were set up in the countryside to provide machinery for agriculture. Mao talked of 600 000 'backyard steel furnaces' springing up, organized and managed by the communes, which also undertook to build roads, canals, dams, reservoirs and irrigation channels.

At first it looked as though the Great Leap might be a failure: there was some opposition to the communes, a series of bad harvests (1959–61) and the withdrawal of all Russian aid following the breach between Russia and China. All this, coupled with the lack of experience among the cadres, caused hardship in the years 1959–63; statistics which emerged later suggested that some 20 million people may have died prematurely as a result of hardships, especially the disastrous famine of 1959–60, caused by the Great Leap. Even Mao's prestige suffered and he was forced to resign as Chairman of the People's Congress (to be succeeded by Liu Shaoqi), though he remained Chairman of the Communist Party. Professor Dikotter's researches in the newly opened archives reveal that the situation was much worse than the official account shows. Towards the end of the Great Leap Forward, special teams were sent out to discover the extent of the disaster around the country. Their findings included reports on peasant resistance during the collectivization campaign, reports about mass murders, confessions of leaders responsible for millions of deaths and reports about working conditions. In the words of Professor Dikotter:

> What comes out of this massive and detailed dossier is a tale of horror in which Chairman Mao emerges as one of the greatest mass murderers in human history, responsible for the premature deaths of at least 45 million people between 1958 and 1962. It is not merely the extent of the catastrophe that dwarfs earlier estimates, but

also the manner in which many people died: between two and three million victims were tortured to death or summarily killed, often for the slightest infraction. When a boy stole a handful of grain in a Hunan village, local boss Xiong Dechang, forced his father to bury him alive. The father died of grief a few days later. … The killing of slackers, weaklings, those too ill to work, or otherwise unproductive elements, increased the overall food supply for those who contributed to the regime through their labour. At one meeting Mao announced: 'It is better to let half the people die so that the other half can eat their fill'.

However, in the long term the importance of the Great Leap became clear. According to the official account, by the early 1970s both agricultural and industrial production had increased substantially, and China was at least managing to feed its massive population without any further famine (which had rarely happened under the KMT). The communes proved to be a successful innovation. They were much more than merely collective farms – they were an efficient unit of local government and they enabled the central government in Beijing to keep in touch with local opinion. They seemed to be the ideal solution to the problem of running a vast country while at the same time avoiding the over-centralization that stifles initiative. The crucial decision had been taken that China would remain predominantly an agricultural country with small-scale industry scattered around the countryside. The economy would be labour-intensive (relying on massive numbers of workers instead of using labour-saving machines). Given the country's enormous population, this was arguably the best way of making sure that everybody had a job, and it enabled China to avoid the growing unemployment problems of the highly industrialized western nations. Other genuine benefits were the spread of education and welfare services and a reduction in infant mortality, which fell from 203 per thousand births in 1949 to 84 by the end of the 1960s. There was also a definite improvement in the position of women in society. Again, however, the true picture may well not be quite so rosy as it appears. In 2012 Jonathan Fenby, an expert in Chinese affairs, making use of the latest research, claimed that Mao 'had brought the country to its knees' and that China was virtually bankrupt in 1976 when Mao died.

(g) The Cultural Revolution (1966–9)

This was Mao's attempt to keep the revolution and the Great Leap on a pure Marxist–Leninist course, and to hit back at what he considered to be an over-bureaucratic party leadership under his deputy, Liu Shauqi. In the early 1960s, when the success of the Great Leap was by no means certain, opposition to Mao grew. Right-wing members of the Party believed that incentives (piecework, greater wage differentials and larger private plots, which had been creeping in in some areas) were necessary if the communes were to function efficiently. They also felt that there should be an expert managerial class to push forward with industrialization on the Russian model, instead of relying on the cadres. Even Deng Xiaoping, one of Mao's most loyal supporters, had grave doubts about the wisdom of the Great Leap. But to the Maoists, these ideas were totally unacceptable; it was exactly what Mao was condemning among the Russians, whom he dismissed as 'revisionists' taking the 'capitalist road'. The Party must avoid the emergence of a privileged class who would exploit the workers; it was vital to keep in touch with the masses.

Between 1963 and 1966 there was a great public debate between the rightists (including Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping) and the Maoists about which course to follow. Mao, using his position as Chairman of the Party to rouse the young people, launched a desperate campaign to 'save' the revolution. In this Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, as he

called it, Mao appealed to the masses. His supporters, the Red Guards (mostly students), toured the country arguing Mao's case, and carrying their Little Red Books containing the thoughts of Chairman Mao. In some areas schools, and later factories, were closed down, as young people were urged to move into the countryside and work on farms. If questioned, they were required to say that they would like to spend their whole lives on the farm, whether it was true or not. It was an incredible propaganda exercise in which Mao was trying to renew revolutionary fervour.

Unfortunately it brought chaos and something close to civil war. Once the student masses had been roused, they denounced and physically attacked anybody in authority, not just critics of Mao. Teachers, professionals, local party officials, all were targets; millions of people were disgraced and ruined. By 1967 the extremists among the Red Guards were almost out of control, and Mao had to call in the army, commanded by Lin Biao, to restore order. Mao, privately admitting that he had made mistakes, in public blamed his advisers and the Red Guard leaders. Many were arrested and executed for 'committing excesses'. At the party conference in April 1969 the Cultural Revolution was formally ended, and Mao was declared free of all blame for what had happened. Later, Mao blamed Defence Minister Lin Biao (his chosen successor), who had always been one of his most reliable supporters, for the over-enthusiasm of the Red Guards. Some sources claim that Mao decided to make Lin Biao the scapegoat because he was trying to manoeuvre Mao into retiring. He was accused of plotting to assassinate Mao (which was highly unlikely), and was killed in an air crash in 1971 while trying to escape to the USSR, or so the official reports claimed.

The Cultural Revolution caused great disruption, ruined millions of lives and probably held up China's economic development by ten years. And yet in spite of that, there was probably some economic recovery in the last few years before Mao's death. Certainly China had made great strides since 1949. Nevertheless, Jonathan Fenby's recent verdict on Mao was damning:

> In general, China had been laid low by his experiments. Poverty was institutionalized. Much of the country was still in a pre-industrial stage. Productivity had slumped. Urban wages were half what they had been under the Nationalist Republic. It took six months' pay to buy a sewing machine. In Guangdong 90 per cent of would-be army recruits were rejected on grounds of size or health. … Productive people were demoralized. Trade was tiny. If there was equality in the People's Republic, it was the equality of poverty.

The most surprising development in Mao's policies during his last years was in foreign affairs when Mao and Zhou En-lai decided it was time to improve relations with the USA.

18.2 LIFE AFTER MAO

(a) A power struggle followed the death of Mao in 1976

There were three main contestants to succeed Mao: Hua Guofeng, named by Mao himself as his successor; Deng Xiaoping, who had been sacked from his position as general secretary of the Party during the Cultural Revolution for allegedly being too liberal; and a group known as the Gang of Four, led by Jiang Qing, Mao's widow, who were extremely militant Mao supporters, more Maoist than Mao himself. Jiang Qing did her best to muscle in and sideline Hua. But she was extremely unpopular with most sections of Chinese society, and it was said that she suffered from an 'empress syndrome'. When the Gang attempted to stage a coup, this gave Hua an excuse to have them arrested.

Meanwhile Deng Xiaoping kept very much in the background, and Hua seemed set to become Supreme Leader.

Hua was keen to press ahead with industrialization and he introduced an ambitious ten-year plan which included an increase in oil production. But things soon went wrong: a large oil rig collapsed with the loss of scores of lives; expensive imported technology and insufficient exports resulted in the biggest trade gap since the mid-1950s; and inflation cancelled out wage increases. Hua Guofeng was blamed for the failures and Deng seized the chance to get rid of him. In 1980 the Politburo decided that Hua 'lacks the political and organizational ability to be the Chairman of the Party'. Hua was forced to resign, leaving the 73-year-old Deng as undisputed leader (June 1981).

In the words of Robert Service: Deng was as hard as teak. He endured as many demotions as promotions at Mao's hand since the 1950s. His son was crippled from the waist down after leaping from a window to escape physical maltreatment in the Cultural Revolution. Deng was forthright about the need for change … and he knew he had no time to waste if he wanted to make the changes he wanted. As a gesture of open criticism of Mao and his policies, the Gang of Four were put on trial for 'evil, monstrous and unpardonable crimes' committed during the Cultural Revolution. They were all found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. The Central Committee of the Party (CCP) issued a 'Resolution' condemning the Cultural Revolution as a grave 'Left' error for which Mao himself was chiefly responsible. However, Mao was praised for his successful efforts to 'smash the counter-revolutionary Lin Biao clique'. As historian Steve Smith explained: 'By pinning the blame on one man in this fashion, the Resolution sought to exculpate the "overwhelming majority" of CCP leaders who were said to have been on the right side in the struggle. The Resolution thus underwrote a shift of authority within the CCP from a single leader to a collective leadership.'

(b) There was a period of dramatic policy changes

This new phase began in June 1978 as Deng Xiaoping gained the ascendancy. Deng somehow succeeded in persuading the Politburo that changes were vital, after all the upheavals and crises caused by the Great Leap Forward and then the Cultural Revolution.

- Many changes introduced during the Cultural Revolution were reversed: the revolutionary committees set up to run local government were abolished and replaced by more democratically elected groups. Property confiscated from former capitalists was returned to survivors, and there was more religious freedom and greater freedom for intellectuals to express themselves in literature and the arts.
- In economic matters Deng and his protégé Hu Yaobang wanted technical and financial help from the West in order to modernize industry, agriculture, science and technology. Loans were accepted from foreign governments and banks, and contracts signed with foreign companies for the supply of modern equipment. In 1980 China joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. On the home front, permission was given for the setting up of private industrial companies. State farms were given more control over planning, financing and profits; bonuses, piece-rates and profit-sharing schemes were encouraged; the state paid higher prices to the communes for their produce and reduced taxes in order to stimulate efficiency and output. These measures had some success – grain output reached a record level in 1979, and many peasants became prosperous.

As so often happens, this reform programme led to demands for more radical reform.

(c) Demands for more radical reform: The Democracy Wall

In November 1978 there was a poster campaign in Beijing and other cities, often in support of Deng Xiaoping. Soon there were massive demonstrations demanding more drastic changes, and early in 1978 the government felt obliged to ban marches and poster campaigns. However, there still remained what was called the 'Democracy Wall' in Beijing, where the public could express itself with huge wall posters (*Dazibao*); During 1979 the posters displayed there became progressively more daring, attacking Chairman Mao and demanding a wide range of human rights:

- the right to criticize the government openly;
- representation for non-communist parties in the National People's Congress;
- freedom to change jobs and to travel abroad;
- abolition of the communes.

This infuriated Deng, who had approved the Democracy Wall in the first place only because most of the posters were criticizing the Gang of Four. Now he launched a fierce attack on the leading dissidents, accusing them of trying to destroy the socialist system. Several were arrested and given prison sentences of up to 15 years. In November 1979 the Democracy Wall was abolished altogether. Law and order and party discipline were restored. 'Without the party', Deng remarked, 'China will retrogress into divisions and confusions.'

(d) Modernization and its problems

Following the first flush of reforming zeal and the embarrassment of the Democracy Wall, the pace slowed considerably. But Deng, together with his two protégés, Hu Yaobang (party general secretary) and Zhao Ziyang (prime minister), was determined to press ahead with modernization as soon as possible.

Zhao Ziyang had won a reputation as a brilliant administrator in Sichuan province where he was responsible for an 80 per cent increase in industrial production in 1979. He also began experiments, later extended to the whole country, to break up the communes so as to give peasants control of individual plots. The land, although still officially owned by the state, was divided up and allocated to individual peasant households, which would be allowed to keep most of the profits. This was successful in raising agricultural production, and the standard of living for many people improved. In December 1984 Zhao announced that compulsory state purchase of crops was to be abandoned; the state would continue to buy staple products, but in much smaller quantities than before. Prices of surplus grain, pork, cotton and vegetables would be allowed to fluctuate on the open market.

By this time, however, modernization and what Deng called the move to 'market socialism' were having some unfortunate side effects. Although exports increased by 10 per cent during 1984, imports increased by 38 per cent, leaving a record trade deficit of $1100 million, and causing a sharp fall in China's foreign exchange reserves. The government tried with some success to control imports by placing heavy duties on all imported goods except vital raw materials and microchip equipment (80 per cent on cars and 70 per cent on colour televisions and video players). Another unwelcome development was that the annual rate of inflation began to rise, reaching 22 per cent in 1986.

(e) The thoughts of Deng Xiaoping

Apparently not unduly worried by these trends, the 82-year-old Deng explained his ideas for the future in a magazine article of November 1986. His main aim was to enable his

people to get richer. By the year 2000, if all went well, the average annual income per head should have risen from the equivalent of £280 to somewhere near £700, and China's production should have doubled. 'To get rich is not a crime', he added. He was happy with the way agricultural reform was going, but emphasized that in industry, sweeping decentralization was still needed. The Party must withdraw from administrative tasks, issue fewer instructions and allow more initiative at the lower levels. Only capitalist investment could create the conditions in which China could become a prosperous, modernized state. His other main theme was China's international role: to lead a peace alliance of the rest of the world against the dangerous ambitions of the USA and the USSR. Nothing, he said, could possibly alter the course he had set for his country.

18.3 TIANANMEN SQUARE, 1989 AND THE CRISIS OF COMMUNISM

(a) The crisis of 1987

In spite of his radical words, Deng always had to keep an eye on the traditional, conservative or Maoist members of the Politburo, who were still powerful and might be able to get rid of him if his economic reforms failed or if party control seemed to be slipping. Deng was doing a clever balancing act between the reformers like Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang on the one hand, and the hardliners like Li Peng on the other. Deng's tactics were to encourage criticism from students and intellectuals, but only up to a point: enough to enable him to drop some of the oldest and most inefficient party bureaucrats. If the criticism looked like getting out of hand, it had to be stopped (as had happened in 1979) for fear of antagonizing the hardliners.

In December 1986 there was a series of student demonstrations supporting Deng Xiaoping and the 'Four Modernizations' (agriculture, industry, science and defence), but urging a much quicker pace and, ominously, more democracy. After the students ignored a new ban on wall posters and a new rule requiring five days' notice for demonstrations, Deng decided that this challenge to party control and discipline had gone far enough, and the demonstrators were dispersed. However, it had been enough to alarm the hardliners, who forced the resignation of the reformer Hu Yaobang as party general secretary. He was accused of being too liberal in his political outlook, encouraging intellectuals to demand greater democracy and even some sort of opposition party. Although this was a serious blow to Deng, it was not a complete disaster since his place was taken by Zhao Ziyang, another economic reformer, but one who had so far kept clear of controversial political ideas; however, Li Peng, a hardline supporter of order and authority, took Zhao's place as prime minister, and he demanded a clampdown on all further protests.

Zhao soon announced that the government had no intention of abandoning its economic reform programme, and promised new measures to speed up financial reform, and at the same time, a clampdown on 'bourgeois intellectuals' who threatened party control. This highlighted the dilemma facing Deng and Zhao: was it possible to offer people a choice in buying and selling and yet deny them any choice in other areas such as policies and political parties? Many western observers thought it was impossible to have one without the other (and so did Gorbachev in the USSR), and by the end of January 1987 there were signs that they could be right. On the other hand, if the economic reforms proved successful, Deng and Zhao could turn out to be right.

(b) Tiananmen Square, 1989

Unfortunately for Deng and Zhao, the economic reforms ran into problems during 1988 and 1989. Inflation went up to 30 per cent, and wages, especially of state employees

(such as civil servants, party officials, police and soldiers), lagged well behind prices. Probably encouraged by Gorbachev's political reforms, and the knowledge that he was to pay a visit to Beijing in mid-May 1989, student demonstrations began again in Tiananmen Square on 17 April; they were demanding political reform, democracy and an end to Communist Party corruption. On 4 May, Zhao Ziyang said that the students' 'just demands would be met', and allowed the press to report the demands; but this outraged Deng. The demonstrations continued throughout Gorbachev's visit (15–18 May, to mark the formal reconciliation between China and the USSR) and into June, with sometimes as many as 250 000 people occupying the square and surrounding streets. The scene was vividly described by John Simpson (in *Despatches from the Barricades*, Hutchinson, 1990), the Foreign Affairs editor of the BBC, who was there for much of the time:

> There was a new spirit of courage and daring. … There was a sense of liberation, that just to be in the Square was a statement in itself. People smiled and shook my hand … everyone, it seemed, listened to the BBC's Chinese language service. The gentleness, the smiles and the headbands were irresistibly reminiscent of the big rock concerts and the anti-Vietnam demonstrations in the 1960s. There was the same certainty that because the protesters were young and peaceful the government must capitulate. … Food was delivered on a regular basis. Ordinary people responded with generosity to requests for bottled water. … Hundreds of thousands of people had decided to join in on the side which seemed certain to win. The major avenues of Peking were blocked with bicycles, cars, lorries, buses and flatbed trucks all heading for the Square, filled with people cheering, singing, playing musical instruments, waving flags, enjoying themselves. The racket of it all could be heard streets away. … Victory seemed a foregone conclusion; how could any government resist a popular uprising of this magnitude?

It certainly began to look very much as though the government had lost control and might soon give way to the demands. Behind the scenes, however, a power struggle was going on in the Politburo between Zhao Ziyang and the hardline Li Peng, the prime minister. Li Peng, with the support of Deng Xiaoping, eventually won. On 20 May Deng declared martial law, and sent Li Peng to negotiate with the protesters. When negotiations failed, thousands of troops were brought in, and on 3–4 June the army, using paratroopers, tanks and infantry, attacked the students, killing between 1500 and 3000 of them. Tiananmen Square was under government control again, and demonstrations in other large cities were also dispersed, though with less bloodshed. The protest leaders were sentenced to long terms in labour camps. Zhao Ziyang was removed from his position as party chief and replaced by Jiang Zemin, a more 'middle of the road' politician. The hardliners were triumphant and Prime Minister Li Peng became the leading figure, when the 85-year-old Deng stepped down as premier in November 1989.

There was worldwide condemnation of the massacres, but Deng and the hardliners were convinced that they had taken the right decision. They felt that to have given way to the students' demands for democracy would have caused too much disruption and confusion; one-party control was needed to supervise the transition to a 'socialist market economy'. Later, events in the USSR seemed to prove them right: when Mikhail Gorbachev tried to introduce economic and political reforms both at the same time, he failed; the Communist Party lost control, the economic reforms were a disaster, and the USSR broke up into fifteen separate states. Whatever the rest of the world thought about the Tiananmen Square massacres, the Chinese leadership could congratulate itself on avoiding Gorbachev's mistakes and preserving communism in China at a time when it was being swept away in eastern Europe.

18.4 THE CHANGING FACE OF COMMUNISM IN CHINA

China's leaders were deeply disturbed by the collapse of communism in eastern Europe. Although they had clamped down on any political changes, Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng and Jiang Zemin were still committed to progressive 'open door' economic policies. Deng often warned that disaster awaited countries where reform proceeded too slowly. He hoped that a successful economy which enabled more and more people to become prosperous would make people forget their desire for 'democracy'. During the 1990s the economy was booming; from 1991 to 1996 China led the world, with average GDP increases of 11.4 per cent, and living standards were rising fast. Eastern and southern China were especially prosperous: cities were growing rapidly, there was significant foreign investment and there were plenty of consumer goods for sale. On the other hand, some of the remote western provinces were not sharing in the prosperity.

A new Five Year Plan, unveiled in March 1996, aimed to keep the economic boom on course by increasing grain production, keeping average GDP growth at 8 per cent, and spreading wealth more evenly among the regions. Although Deng Xiaoping died in 1997, Jiang Zemin, who became the next president, could be relied on to continue his policies in spite of criticism from the party hardliners. Public unrest had all but disappeared, partly because of China's economic success, and partly because of the government's ruthless treatment of dissidents. Jiang was determined to launch an assault on corruption within the Party; this was mainly to please the hardliners, who blamed the widespread corruption on Deng's capitalist reforms; it would also help to silence the dissidents who had made corruption one of their favourite targets. In 2000 there was a series of trials of high-ranking officials, several of whom were found guilty of fraud and accepting bribes; some were executed and others received long prison sentences. The government even organized an exhibition in Beijing to show how well it was dealing with corruption.

Jiang's next step (May 2000) was to announce what he called *the Three Represents*, an attempt to define what the CCP stood for, and also to emphasize that no matter how much the economic system might change, there would be no dramatic political changes, and certainly no moves towards democracy, so long as he was in control. He pointed out that the CCP represented three main concerns – to look after:

- China's development and modernization;
- China's culture and heritage;
- the interests of the vast majority of the Chinese people.

To help make good the claim that the Party genuinely represented all the people, Jiang announced (July 2001) that it was now open to capitalists. The hardliners, who still clung to the idea that communist parties were there for the good of the working class, criticized this move. However, Jiang thought it was reasonable since the capitalists had been responsible for most of China's recent economic success, and he pressed ahead regardless. Many of the capitalists were delighted to join, since party membership gave them access to political influence. Restrictions were relaxed on trade unions: workers were now allowed to protest to employers about problems of safety, poor working conditions and long working hours. More good news came with the announcement that Beijing was to host the 2008 Summer Olympics.

(a) Leadership changes

Jiang Zemin, general secretary of the Party and president of China, together with several others among the older leaders were due to step down from their posts at the Sixteenth

Congress of the CCP, to be held in November 2002, the first to take place since 1997. In his final speech as general secretary, the 76-year-old Jiang voiced his determination that the CCP must remain in absolute power, and that this would involve broadening the power base of the Party so that all classes would be represented. 'Leadership by the Party', he said, 'is the fundamental guarantee that the people are the masters of the country and that the country is ruled by law.' With that, Jiang retired as general secretary, though he was to remain president until the National People's Congress met in March 2003. Hu Jintao was elected CCP general secretary in place of Jiang.

The National People's Congress saw the completion of the sweeping leadership changes. Hu Jintao was chosen as the new president and he appointed Wen Jiabao as prime minister or premier. Wen had a reputation as a progressive, and was considered lucky to have survived the purges after the Tiananmen Square massacres in 1989. It was not long before the new leadership announced some important changes, both economic and political.

- Parts of some of China's largest state-owned enterprises were to be sold off to foreign or private companies; some smaller companies were allowed to become private. However, the government emphasized that it was committed to retaining control of many large industries (November 2003).
- In December 2003, six independent candidates were allowed to stand in local elections in Beijing for the district legislature. They were standing against over 4000 official CCP candidates, so that even if all six were elected, their impact would be minimal. However, it was an interesting departure from the usual practice.

Meanwhile China's economic success continued, despite an outbreak of the deadly SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus during the early summer of 2003, which infected over 5000 people and killed around 350. Statistics showed that during 2003 the economy had expanded by over 8 per cent, its fastest rate for six years; this was thought to be largely the result of a shift towards consumer spending. The government claimed that it had created over 6 million jobs during the year. Many of the new factories were foreign-owned – multinational firms could hardly wait to set up business in China in order to exploit the cheap labour. By 2010 China had become the world's largest manufacturer and exporter. It was the largest maker of steel and the biggest user of energy. In the words of Jonathan Fenby:

> The last major state on earth to be ruled by a Communist party plays a pivotal role in the global supply chain, assembling goods for foreign firms at prices they could not achieve at home. It has the largest monetary reserves of any country, topping $2.3 trillion. Its cheap labour, cheap capital, productivity and sheer competitiveness have exported price deflation to the rest of the globe, while its voracious appetite for raw materials laps up oil from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, iron ore from Brazil, coal and more ore from Australia, timber from Russia, and key metals from wherever they are mined. … Growth and modernization have transformed society and demographics. Average annual per capita income has soared from 528 yuan in the early 1980s to 18,100 in urban areas and 5900 in the countryside.
>
> (The 2010 exchange rates were £1 = 10 yuan, $1 = 6.4 yuan, 1 euro = 8.7 yuan.)

Nevertheless, there were many areas of concern.

- Prosperity was not evenly spread: incomes and living standards were improving steadily for the two-fifths of the total population of 1.3 billion who lived in towns and cities; but millions of rural Chinese, especially in the west of China, were still

struggling on or below the poverty line. According to UN statistics, more than 200 million Chinese were still living in 'relative poverty', while over 20 million were living in 'absolute poverty'. It was estimated that around 300 million people had no access to clean drinking water. At the other end of the scale, almost 1 million people were reported to be millionaires (in terms of dollars or sterling).

- The economy was expanding so fast that it was in danger of moving into over-production, which could lead to a reduction in sales and a slump. For example, in 2009 excess capacity stood at 28 per cent in steel production and at 33 per cent in aluminium. It seems likely that within a few years car companies will have 20 per cent too much plant.
- China's success caused strained relations with the USA, where manufacturers were feeling the competition from cheaper Chinese goods. Washington blamed the Chinese for the loss of millions of US jobs, complaining, with some justification, that the yuan was being deliberately undervalued in order to give Chinese exports an unfair advantage.
- Chinese banks were suffering from problems of overlending and bad debts. They had been guilty of overspending on a huge range of building projects in the main cities, new roads and railways, and what was deemed to be the world's largest engineering project – the Three Gorges Dam. Many of the state-run companies which received the loans have failed to repay. In 2004 the Chinese government was forced to bail out two of the largest state-owned banks – the Bank of China and China Construction Bank – to the tune of £24.6 billion.
- In spite of all the economic progress, the government continued to oppose any demands for political change. Anybody who complained publicly or staged a protest demonstration would be ruthlessly suppressed. In fact China had signed an agreement accepting UN advice on how to improve its justice and police systems, and promising to improve its human rights record (November 2000). However, in February 2001, Amnesty International complained that China was actually increasing its use of torture in the questioning of political dissidents, Tibetan nationalists and members of Falun Gong (a semi-religious organization which practised meditation, and which had been banned in 1999 on the grounds that it was a threat to public order). Dissidents were making more use of the internet, setting up websites and communicating with each other by email; the government therefore began a determined clampdown on 'internet subversion', persuading Google and others not to include politically sensitive material in their coverage of China.
- As the decade progressed, discontent grew, especially among peasants in the countryside. They had done well from the break-up of the communes and had made good profits from selling much of their harvests. But now they were being taxed heavily and were also being exploited by local governments which illegally seized their land and sold it to offset their debts. In 2004 there were no fewer than 74 000 'mass incidents' or public protests against a wide variety of malpractice – lack of democracy, high taxes, high prices, corruption in high places and safety scandals. The government stepped up its repressive policies and by 2012 it was estimated that between 5 and 6 million dissidents were being held in labour camps. Many of them had been tortured.

Wen Jiabao was the only leading politician to show any sympathy with these dissenters. He publicly called for political and legal reform, and the need to respect people's rights – including the ownership rights of farmers. But Hu Jintao had developed a consensus style of government in which, although different power groups exist, they restrain each other, so

that only mutually beneficial policies are followed, and no real reforming progress can be made. Some commentators even think that Wen's performance, as Jonathan Fenby puts it, 'is all part of an orchestrated campaign to dangle the possibility of reform that will never be delivered'. Meanwhile the economy continued to perform well. In 2008–9, when the rest of the world was suffering from the global financial crisis, China seemed to emerge relatively unscathed. As the global economy continued in crisis, it was reported in 2011 that President Sarkozy of France, emerging from a summit meeting discussing how to save the eurozone, immediately telephoned Beijing to ask for help. The cry went up around Europe and the Americas: 'Will China save the world?'

(b) What of the future?

Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao were due to reach the end of their term in office in 2012. Determined to go out on a high, in 2011 they introduced another Five Year Plan, to be completed in 2015. This aimed to increase spending on research and development (R&D) so that China could move away from low-cost manufacturing and into more advanced industrial production. For example, work was in progress to produce a 220-seat airliner, to be flying by 2016, and a preliminary agreement had been signed with Ryanair, the low-cost airline. In 2012 China had 13 nuclear power stations, and was planning to have at least 120 by 2020. A Chinese astronaut had already walked in space, and there were plans to land a man on the moon by 2020.

All this raises many questions. Will China overtake the USA as the world's greatest power? If the Chinese 'economic miracle' continues, will this plunge Europe and the USA into mass unemployment and ruin? And does it also mean that the Chinese political system is more efficient than western-style democracy? There has been no shortage of people willing to answer that question. The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama argues that China's one-party system enables decisive action to be taken, avoiding 'the delays of a messy democratic process'. The financier George Soros believes that China has 'not only a more vigorous economy, but actually a better-functioning government than the United States'.

On the other hand, some western and Chinese observers take the opposite view. Critics argue that with the falling birth rate, demand will inevitably decline, leaving China with a large over-capacity problem; money has been wasted on vast infrastructure projects that will never bring any return, and there is an enormous problem of non-performing loans. Perhaps the most serious weakness is the steadily increasing social tensions. Ai Weiwei, the well-known Chinese artist, compared the country to 'a runner sprinting very fast – but he has a heart condition'. But when he voiced his concerns publicly, he was arrested for 'economic crimes' in 2011. Other critics point to the increasing disparity between rich and poor, and between countryside and city, the poor quality and the rising expense of health care, and the vast amount of corruption. In 2011 there were a staggering 180 000 'collective protest incidents'. Roderick MacFarquhar, writing in 2011, argued that it was as though China were sitting on some massive geological fault which must one day split wide open, plunging the whole country into ruin. By the autumn of 2012 there were ominous signs as exports began to fall and large stockpiles of coal, steel and cars were reported, and many firms producing cheap clothing for export collapsed. One sales manager lamented: 'I feel like a blossoming summer has turned into a dull winter. In 2008 we didn't feel the crisis at all. This year we do feel that the crisis has really struck.'

As China moved towards October 2012, preparations were under way for the handover of power after Hu and Wen stand down. The likely candidates seemed to be Xi Jinping, the

party secretary in Shanghai, and Li Keqiang, a close associate of Hu. But behind the scenes there were competing factions, each with ambitions. For example, Bo Xilai of Chongquing seemed to have leadership ambitions. He became party secretary in Chongqing in 2007 and was responsible for what became known as the Chongqing experiment. According to Professor Wang Hui of Tsinghua University in Beijing:

> The Chongqing model operated within China's existing political institutions and development structures which emphasise attracting business and investment, but involved quite distinctive social reforms. Large-scale industrial and infrastructural development went hand in hand with an ideology of greater equality – officials were instructed to 'eat the same, live the same, work the same' as the people – and an aggressive campaign against organized crime. Open debate and political participation were encouraged, and policies adjusted accordingly. No other large-scale political and economic programme has been carried out so openly since the reform era began in 1978 soon after Mao's death.

During 2011 the movement spread to Beijing, and it seemed that Bo and his policies had won the support of Xi Jinping. Unfortunately for Bo, this all coincided with decisions by Hu and Wen to put political reform on hold and to tighten up bureaucracy and control from the centre. The idea of different local models ran counter to this trend. Bo had also made the mistake of suggesting that the Chongquing model compared in importance with Mao's Cultural Revolution. This gave Wen the chance to announce that the Chongquing reforms would lead to a repeat of the chaos caused by the Cultural Revolution. Therefore it must be condemned and placed on the list of subjects not available for public discussion. In March 2012 Bo was sacked as Chongqing party secretary on the grounds of corruption. In reality the government's aim was to clamp down on political freedom so that it would be easier to continue pressing ahead with their unpopular neo-liberal policies. At the same time it got rid of a dangerous leadership rival. In fact Jonathan Fenby, in his reply to Professor Wang Hui (in the *London Review of Books*, 24 May 2012), is convinced that this was the real reason why Bo was removed. 'He had simply become too big for his boots ahead of the selection of a new Politburo Standing Committee at the Communist Party Congress later this year. When word spread that he sought the internal security portfolio on the Standing Committee, his downfall was guaranteed.' His ruin seemed complete when, in September 2012, he was expelled from the Communist Party.

In November 2012, at the party congress in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Hu Jintao formally handed power over to the next leader, Xi Jinping. China had certainly changed in the ten years since Hu came to power. In 2002 it was the world's sixth largest economy, now it is the second. For the first time it has become an urban nation, with just over half of its 1.4 billion people living in cities. However, Premier Xi Jinping and his prime minister, Li Keqiang, face serious problems. The economy is unhealthy, and many experts are advising that China's state-owned enterprises should be privatized. But there is little sign of any such radical changes on the agenda. There is considerable social unrest, caused by the widening gap between rich and poor, the widespread corruption within the communist party, and the revelations that many of the party leaders and their families have amassed huge personal fortunes. According to Bo Zhiyue, a research fellow at the National University of Singapore, 'corruption within the Chinese Communist Party is so rampant … if they don't do anything about this they will lose credibility very quickly. … Eventually the credibility deficit will become so huge that it could mean the collapse of the CCP as the ruling party' (*Guardian*, 9 November 2012).

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Chapter

19 Communism in Korea and south-east Asia

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

In Korea and some of the countries of south-east Asia, foreign occupation, among other factors, had led to the development of communist parties, which were usually in the forefront of resistance and which played a vital role in the campaign for independence.

- **Korea** was under Japanese rule for most of the first half of the twentieth century and regained its independence when Japan was defeated at the end of the Second World War. However, it was divided into two separate states – the North was communist, the South non-communist. After the war of 1950–3, the two states remained strictly separate; North Korea, one of the most secretive and little-known states in the world, has remained communist until the present day.
- The area known as **Indo-China** was under French control, and consisted of three countries: **Vietnam**, **Cambodia** and **Laos**. At the end of the Second World War, instead of gaining their independence, as they had expected in view of France's defeat, they found that the French intended to behave as though nothing had happened and to reimpose their colonial rule. Vietnam and Laos, unlike Cambodia, were not content to sit back and wait for the French to withdraw. They fought a long campaign, in which the communist parties of both countries played a prominent part. In 1954 the French admitted defeat, and all three states became completely independent.

Tragically, this did not bring a more peaceful era.

- **Communist North Vietnam** became involved in a long conflict with **South Vietnam** (1961–75), which became part of the Cold War. There was massive American involvement in support of South Vietnam. Thanks to Chinese help, North Vietnam was victorious, but both states were devastated by the war. In 1975 the two Vietnams were united under communist rule, a situation which has lasted until the present day.
- **Cambodia** succeeded in remaining relatively peaceful until 1970, under the semi-autocratic rule of Prince Sihanouk. Eventually the country found itself dragged into the Vietnam War. It suffered five years of catastrophic heavy bombing by the USA, followed by four years of rule by the bloodthirsty communist Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge regime. By the time he was overthrown in 1979, thanks to the intervention of Vietnamese communist forces, Cambodia had probably suffered as much devastation as Vietnam. For the next ten years a more moderate communist government with Vietnamese backing ran Cambodia, after which the country returned to something like democratic rule, with Prince Sihanouk again playing a leading role.

- **Laos** also had a turbulent history. Soon after independence, civil war broke out between right and left, until it too suffered the same fate as Cambodia – it was drawn into the Vietnam War in spite of its desire to remain neutral, and had to endure indiscriminate US bombing. At the end of 1975 the communist Pathet Lao organization took power, and is still in control of the country today.

19.1 NORTH KOREA

(a) The communist regime established

Korea had been under Japanese occupation and rule since 1905, following the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. There was a strong Korean nationalist movement, and at a conference held in Cairo in 1943, the USA, the UK and China promised that when the war was over, a united, independent Korea would be created. As defeat loomed for Japan early in 1945, it seemed that at last a free Korea was a distinct possibility.

Unfortunately for the Koreans, things did not work out as they had hoped: three weeks before the Japanese surrendered, the USSR declared war on Japan (8 August 1945). This brought a new element into the equation; the Russians had for many years wanted to gain influence in Korea, and their entry into the war meant that they too would have a say in Korea's future. Russian troops in Manchuria were closest to Korea, and were able to move into the north of the country even before the Japanese officially surrendered on 2 September. Soviet forces worked closely with Korean communists and nationalists, and the Japanese occupying armies were quickly disarmed. The Korean People's Republic was proclaimed, and *the communist leader*, *Kim Il-sung*, *soon emerged as the dominant political figure*. Supported by Soviet troops, Kim, who had been trained in the USSR, began to introduce his own version of Marxism–Leninism into the new state.

Meanwhile, the Americans, who were worried that the entire Korean peninsula was about to be taken over by the Russians, hastily sent troops to occupy the south. It was the Americans who proposed that the division between north and south should be along the 38th parallel. *In the south*, *Dr Syngman Rhee emerged as the leading politician*. He was strongly nationalist and anti-communist, and was determined to bring about a united Korea free of communism. In response, Stalin poured massive Russian aid into the north, transforming it into a powerful military state well able to defend itself against any attack from the south. In 1948 Stalin withdrew Soviet troops, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed, with Kim Il-sung as premier. North Korea therefore had an independent communist government before the communist victory in China. The following year, after Mao Zedong became Chinese leader, the independent North Korea was given official diplomatic recognition by China, the USSR and the communist states of eastern Europe.

(b) One state or two?

The dominating question in the immediate post-war period was: *what had become of the Allied promise of a united Korea?* Ideally, the Americans wanted a united, anti-communist and pro-Western Korea, while the Russians, and after 1949 the Chinese, wanted a unified Korea which was communist. However, neither the USA nor the USSR wanted to become closely involved; given the entrenched positions of both Kim and Rhee, the dilemma seemed insoluble. It was therefore agreed that the problem be handed over to the United Nations, which undertook to organize elections for the whole country as a first step towards unifying the peninsula.

Kim refused to hold elections in North Korea, because the population of the north was much smaller than that of the south, so that the communists would be in a minority in the country as a whole. However, elections were held in the south; the new National Assembly chose Rhee as first president of the Republic of Korea. North Korea responded by holding its own elections, which resulted in Kim's victory. Both leaders claimed to speak for the whole country. In June 1949 the Americans thankfully withdrew their troops from South Korea, where Rhee was becoming an embarrassment because of his corrupt and authoritarian rule, which was almost as extreme as Kim's in the north. But *the withdrawal of all foreign troops left a potentially unstable and dangerous situation*.

Only a year later, on 25 June 1950, after a number of border clashes, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Rhee's armies quickly began to fall apart, and the communists seemed poised to unite the country under their government in Pyongyang. The immediate reasons why Kim launched the attack are still a matter for debate among historians. What is certain is that by the time a peace agreement was signed in 1953, at least 4 million Koreans had lost their lives, and the peninsula was destined to remain divided for the foreseeable future into two heavily armed and mutually suspicious states.

(c) North Korea after the war

Thanks to Chinese help, Kim and his regime had survived. Once the war was over he concentrated on eliminating all remaining domestic opposition – first the non-communist groups, and then all rivals for the leadership within the Korean Communist Party. Having made himself into an absolute ruler, he remained in power, apparently unassailable, for the next 40 years, until his death in 1994. Although he was a communist, he had his own ideas about exactly what that meant, and he did not merely imitate the USSR and China.

- He began a programme of industrialization, and the collectivization of agriculture, aiming for self-sufficiency in all areas of the economy, so that North Korea would not be dependent on help from either of its great communist allies. Ironically, however, he accepted considerable aid from both of them, which enabled the economy to expand rapidly during the first ten years after the war. Living standards improved and the future under Kim's regime looked promising.
- Great emphasis was placed on building up the country's military strength after the disappointing performance in the second half of the war. The army and air force were increased in size and new military airfields were built. Kim never abandoned the dream of bringing the south under his control.
- The whole of society was strictly regimented in pursuit of self-sufficiency; the state controlled everything – the economic plans, the labour force, the resources, the military and the media. Kim's propaganda system was geared towards building up his personality cult as the great infallible leader of his people. The government's total control of the media and communications with the outside world meant that North Korea was probably the most isolated, secretive and closed state in the world.
- In the mid-1960s the principle of self-sufficiency was officially defined as consisting of four themes: 'autonomy in ideology, independence in politics, self-sufficiency in economy, and self-reliance in defence'.
- Kim continued his anti-south campaign, attempting to destabilize the government of the south in a variety of ways, the most outrageous of which was an attempt, which failed, by North Korean commandos to murder the South Korean president (1968). With the development of détente in the early 1970s, and the improving relations between East and West, the North called off its campaign and began talks with the south. In July 1972 it was announced that both sides had agreed to work peacefully

for unification. However, the North's policy was erratic: sometimes Kim suspended all discussions; in 1980 he proposed a federal state in which both North and South would have equal representation; in 1983 several leading South Koreans were killed in a bomb explosion; in 1987 a South Korean airliner was destroyed by a time bomb. Then in 1991, high-level talks were held which led to the announcement of a joint renunciation of violence and nuclear weapons. However, it seemed as though no genuine progress could be made while Kim was still in charge.

- During the second half of the 1960s, North Korea's economy ran into difficulties for a number of reasons. The rift between the USSR and China, which gradually widened from 1956 onwards, placed Kim in a difficult position. Which side should he support? At first he stayed pro-Soviet, then he switched his allegiance to China, and finally tried to be independent of both. When he moved away from Moscow at the end of the 1950s, the USSR sharply reduced its aid; in 1966 at the beginning of Mao's Cultural Revolution, the Chinese cut off their aid. After that, none of Kim's development plans reached their targets. Another serious weakness was the excessive expenditure on heavy industry and armaments. Consumer goods and luxuries were considered to be of secondary importance. There was a rapid population increase, which put a strain on agriculture and the food industries generally. Living standards fell; life for most people was hard and conditions basic. During the 1980s the economy recovered but in the early 1990s, as aid from Russia disappeared, there were more difficulties.

(d) Life under Kim Jong-il

In 1980 Kim Il-sung ('Great Leader') made it clear that he intended his son Kim Jong-il (soon to be known as 'Dear Leader'), who had been acting as Party Secretary, to be his successor. The younger Kim gradually took over more of the day-to-day work of government, until his father died of a heart attack in 1994 at the age of 82. By this time North Korea was facing crisis. The economy had deteriorated further during the previous ten years, the population had increased threefold since 1954 and the country was on the verge of famine. Yet enormous amounts of cash had been spent developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. With the collapse of the USSR, North Korea had lost one of the few states which might be expected to show some sympathy with its plight.

Kim Jong-il, who was more open-minded and progressive than his father, was forced into drastic action. *He accepted that North Korea needed to move away from its isolationism* and aimed to improve relations with the south and with the USA. In 1994 he agreed to shut down North Korea's plutonium-producing nuclear-reactor plants in return for the provision of alternative sources of energy – two light-water nuclear reactors for the generation of electricity – by an international consortium known as KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization), involving the USA, South Korea and Japan. The Clinton administration was sympathetic, agreeing to ease US economic sanctions against North Korea; in return, Kim suspended his long-range missile tests (1999). In June 2000 President Kim Dae-jung of South Korea visited Pyongyang and soon afterwards a number of North Korean political prisoners who had been held in the south for many years were released. Even more startling, in October, American secretary of state Madeleine Albright paid a visit to Pyongyang and had positive talks with Kim. North Korea reopened diplomatic relations with Italy and Australia. In 2001 Kim, who had gained a reputation as something of a recluse, paid state visits to China and Russia, where he met President Putin, and promised that his missile testing would remain in suspension at least until 2003.

Meanwhile the situation inside North Korea continued to deteriorate. In April 2001 it was reported that following the severe winter, there were serious food shortages, with most

people surviving on 200 grams of rice a day. In response, Germany immediately promised to send 30 000 tonnes of beef. In May the deputy foreign minister presented a horrifying report to a UNICEF conference about conditions in his country. Between 1993 and 2000, mortality rates for children under 5 had risen from 27 to 48 per thousand; per capita Gross National Product had fallen from $991 per year to $457; the percentage of children being vaccinated against diseases such as polio and measles fell from 90 to 50 per cent; and the percentage of the population with access to safe water fell from 86 to 53. In 2001 North Korea received almost $300 million-worth of food aid from the European Union, the USA, Japan and even from South Korea.

In July 2002 a programme of limited economic reform was introduced: the currency was devalued and food prices were allowed to rise in the hope that this would encourage an increase in agricultural production. Food rationing was to be phased out and a family-unit farming system was introduced for the first time since collectivization. At the end of 2003 reports indicated that living conditions inside North Korea were showing signs of improvement. However, by the summer of 2005 there were soldiers in the paddy fields to make sure that every grain of rice was handed over to the state procurement agency. There was even a ban on private selling of produce from kitchen gardens. At the same time there was disturbing information about the existence of large numbers of labour camps in the north of the country containing thousands of political prisoners, and where torture and execution were common – a situation reminiscent of Stalin's gulag system in the USSR.

(e) North Korea, USA and the nuclear confrontation

On top of all the economic problems, *relations with the USA took a sudden turn for the worse when George W. Bush came to power there in January 2001*. The new president seemed reluctant to continue the sympathetic approach begun by the Clinton regime. After the 11 September atrocities he issued threats against what he called 'the axis of evil', by which he meant Iraq, Iran and North Korea. *The confrontation with the USA developed over the question of whether or not North Korea possessed nuclear weapons*. The Americans suspected that they did, but the North Koreans claimed that their nuclear-reactor plants were to provide electricity. The behaviour of both sides, especially North Korea, was inconsistent, and the dispute was still ongoing in 2012. The problem arose from the lack of progress with the KEDO project agreed in 1994. Work was not even started on the promised light-water reactors; the Americans accused Kim of not completing the promised shutdown of his existing nuclear plants, while the North Koreans protested that work on the new light-water reactors must start before they shut down their own reactors. In August 2002 work actually began on the first of the light-water reactors. The Americans then demanded that Korea allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its existing nuclear facilities, but the Koreans refused and blamed the USA for the delay in building the reactors. The Americans imposed technology sanctions on the North Koreans and accused them of supplying ballistic missile parts to Yemen.

After a meeting with the Japanese prime minister, Yurichiro Koizimi, Kim conceded that he would allow the inspectors in. However, when this failed to produce a positive response from the USA, it was announced that North Korea would restart its nuclear power plant at Yongbyon, which had been closed since 1994. The USA then declared the KEDO project to be null and void, although Japan and South Korea were prepared to go ahead with it. The Americans, who were also threatening war against Iraq, continued their hardline stance, claiming that the USA was capable of winning two large-scale wars in different areas at the same time (December 2002). The North Koreans responded by

announcing their withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signed in 1970, though they insisted that they had no plans to make nuclear weapons. What they really wanted, their ambassador told the UN, was a non-aggression pact with the USA. This the Americans refused, claiming that the Koreans already had at least two nuclear bombs. At about the same time the UN World Food Programme reported that there were serious shortages of basic foods and medicines in North Korea, and appealed for contributions of grain.

January 2003 brought a sudden change in US policy: President Bush, probably under pressure from Japan and South Korea, who were anxious to see the crisis resolved, offered to resume food and fuel aid to North Korea if it dismantled its nuclear weapons programme. The Koreans insisted that they had no nuclear weapons and had no intention of making any, and said they were ready to allow the USA to send its own inspectors to verify the claims. However, in April 2003 a spokesman for the North Korean foreign ministry claimed that they already had nuclear weapons and would shortly have enough plutonium for eight more nuclear warheads. This gave rise to widespread international speculation and discussion over whether or not the North Koreans really did have nuclear weapons; the majority view seemed to be that they did not, and that their tactics were designed to force the USA to make concessions, such as economic aid and a non-aggression agreement. Another theory was that, given the recent American and British attack on Iraq, Kim wanted to make Bush think twice before he took on North Korea as well.

Although some members of Bush's administration made hostile remarks about Kim Jong-il, the president himself was anxious to calm things, especially as American forces were becoming embroiled in an increasingly difficult situation in Iraq. In August 2003 the Americans softened their approach in talks with the North Koreans: instead of demanding that the nuclear programme be scrapped completely before US aid would be resumed, they now signified that a step-by-step approach to dismantling nuclear facilities would be acceptable and would be matched by 'corresponding steps' from the American side. Later Bush announced that the USA would continue to finance the KEDO project and was prepared to offer North Korea assurances of security in exchange for a verifiable scrapping of its nuclear weapons programme. North Korea replied that it was ready to consider Bush's proposals (October 2003). Then in February 2005 the government announced that it now had nuclear weapons, and in October 2006 it claimed to have successfully exploded a nuclear device underground, without any radiation leak.

In 2009 relations between North and South Korea became strained after the north carried out more nuclear tests, and even more so in 2010 when it was revealed that North Korea had opened a new uranium-enriching plant. There were several clashes between the two naval forces, and then in March 2010 a South Korean corvette, the *Cheonan,* was sunk by a torpedo fired from a North Korean submarine, with the loss of 46 lives. In November 2010 the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong was bombarded by North Korean shells and rockets. There was considerable damage to both military and civilian property, and four people were killed. The North Koreans claimed that the south had fired first, and in fact the incident took place during the annual joint South Korean–US military and naval exercise in and around the Yellow Sea, off the west coast of South Korea. The North Korean government regards this as part of the preparations for an eventual invasion of their territory, and every year tensions rose in case the exercise turned out to be the real thing.

In December 2011 Kim Jong-il, the Dear Leader, died of a heart attack and his third son, Kim Jong-un, was named as the next Supreme Leader. It seemed likely that he would continue with broadly the same policies as his father. His administration got off to a disappointing start when, in April 2012, a rocket that was meant to send an observational satellite into orbit broke up and crashed into the Yellow Sea shortly after lift-off.

19.2 VIETNAM

(a) The struggle for independence

Vietnam, together with Laos and Cambodia, was part of the French Empire in south-east Asia, known as the Indochinese Union, which was established in 1887. In many ways the French were good colonial administrators; they built roads and railways, schools and hospitals, and even a university in Hanoi, in the north of Vietnam. But there was very little industrialization; most of the people were poor peasants for whom life was a struggle. During the 1930s, protest movements began to emerge, but these were unceremoniously suppressed by the French authorities. The French attitude encouraged nationalist and revolutionary feelings and brought *a rush of support for the new Vietnamese Communist Party, formed by Ho Chi Minh in 1929*. Ho Chi Minh had spent time in France, China and the USSR; he had always been a committed nationalist, but after his travels abroad, he became a committed communist as well. *His dream was a united Vietnam under communist rule*. During the 1930s, however, there seemed little hope of breaking free from French control.

The French defeat in Europe in June 1940 raised hopes of Vietnamese independence, but these were soon dashed when Japanese forces moved into Indochina. When the nationalists and communists launched a full-scale uprising in the south of Vietnam, the French (now under orders from the Vichy government and therefore technically on the same side as Germany and Japan) and Japanese worked together and the rising was brutally crushed. With the communist movement almost wiped out in the South, Ho Chi Minh moved to the north and organized the communist and nationalist resistance movement, the League for the Independence of Vietnam, known as 'Vietminh'.

The Vietminh were forced to bide their time until the tide turned against the Japanese. In the summer of 1945, with the Japanese defeat imminent (they surrendered on 14 August), Ho Chi Minh prepared to seize the initiative before the French returned. Vietminh forces and supporters took over Hanoi, Saigon and most of the large towns, and in September 1945 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed with Ho Chi Minh as president. Unfortunately the declaration proved to be premature. It had been agreed among the Allies that when the war ended, the southern half of Vietnam should come under British and French administration. When British forces moved in, it was decided that French control should be restored as soon as possible.

Unbelievably, the British used Japanese troops who were still in Vietnam after their government had surrendered, and who had still not been disarmed, to suppress the Vietminh in the south. The British were anxious not to deprive their ally of its colonies, since this might encourage a general trend towards decolonization, in which Britain might also lose its empire. By the end of the year, order had been restored and some 50 000 French troops had arrived to take control. At this time, before the Cold War developed, the Americans were appalled at what had happened, since they had promised to liberate the people of Indo-China. As J. A. S. Grenville points out (in *The Collins History of the World in the Twentieth Century*), this was

> one of the most extraordinary episodes of the post-war period. If the south had been permitted to follow the north and the independence of the whole of Indo-China had been accepted by the British, the trauma of the longest war in Asia, which led to at least 2.5 million deaths and untold misery, might have been avoided.

At first the French seemed prepared to compromise. They controlled the south but recognized the independence of the Vietnamese Republic in the north, provided it remained within the French Union. However, during the summer of 1946 it became increasingly clear that the French had no intention of allowing the north genuine independence. Ho Chi

Minh therefore demanded complete independence for the whole of Vietnam. The French rejected this, and hostilities began when they shelled the northern port of Haiphong, killing thousands of Vietnamese civilians. After eight years of bitter struggle, the French were finally defeated at Dien Bien Phu (1954); the Geneva Agreements recognized the independence of Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam, but for the time being the area south of the 17th parallel of latitude was to be controlled by an international commission of Canadians, Poles and Indians. The commission was to organize elections for the whole country in July 1956, after which Vietnam would be united.

(b) The two Vietnams

All the indications were that the Vietminh would win the national elections, but once again their hopes were dashed. The elections never took place: *with the Cold War in full swing*, *the Americans were determined to prevent Vietnam becoming united under a government with strong communist connections*. They backed Ngo Dinh Diem, a nationalist and anti-communist, for the leadership of the south. In 1955 he proclaimed the Vietnam Republic, with himself as president of a strongly anti-communist regime; elections had disappeared from the agenda.

By this time, both Vietnams were in a sorry state, devastated by almost a decade of fighting. Ho Chi Minh's government in Hanoi received aid from the USSR and China and began to introduce socialist policies of industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture. President Ngo Dinh Diem's government in Saigon became increasingly unpopular, causing more people to join the communists or Vietcong, who were enthusiastically backed by the North. (For subsequent developments and the Vietnam War 1961–75, see section 7.3.)

(c) The Socialist Republic of Vietnam isolated

The government of the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam, *officially proclaimed in July 1976*, *with its capital at Hanoi*, *faced daunting problems*. The country had hardly known peace for over 30 years. Large parts of the north had been devastated by American bombings, and throughout the country millions of people were homeless. Their inspirational leader, Ho Chi Minh, had died in 1969. Clearly, recovery would be a struggle.

- The government began to extend its centralized command-economy policies to the south, abolishing capitalism and collectivizing farm land. But this aroused serious opposition, especially in the great business and commercial centre of Saigon (which was renamed Ho Chi Minh City). Many people refused to co-operate and did their utmost to sabotage the new socialist measures. The cadres, whose job was to go out into the countryside to organize collectivization, were often unwilling and incompetent. This, together with the corruption which was rife among party officials, turned the whole process into a disaster.
- There were serious divisions among the top party leaders over how long pure Marxist–Leninist policies should be continued. Some wanted to follow China's example and experiment with elements of capitalism; but the hardliners condemned these ideas as sacrilegious.
- In the late 1970s the country suffered from major floods and drought, which, together with collectivization problems and the rapid increase in population, caused serious food shortages. Hundreds of thousands of people fled the country, some on foot to Thailand and Malaya, and others by sea (the 'boat people').

- Vietnamese foreign policy was expensive and brought the county into conflict with its neighbours. The regime aimed to form alliances with the new left-wing governments in Laos and Cambodia (Kampuchea). When Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia refused the offer of a close relationship and persisted with provocative border raids, Vietnam invaded and occupied most of the country (December 1978). The Khmer Rouge were driven out and replaced by a pro-Vietnamese government. However, the Khmer Rouge were not finished: they began a guerrilla war against the new regime, and the Vietnamese were forced to send some 200 000 troops to maintain their ally in power. To make matters worse, Pol Pot was a protégé of the Chinese, who were furious at Vietnam's intervention. In February 1979 they launched an invasion of northern Vietnam; they inflicted considerable damage in the frontier area, although they did not escape unscathed as the Vietnamese mounted a spirited defence. The Chinese withdrew after three weeks, claiming to have taught the Vietnamese a sharp lesson. After that, the Chinese supported the Khmer Rouge guerrillas, and the USA, Japan and most of the states of Western Europe imposed a trade embargo on Vietnam. It was a bizarre situation in which the USA and its allies continued to support Pol Pot, one of the most grotesque and brutal dictators the world had ever seen.

By the mid-1980s Vietnam was almost completely isolated; its neighbours in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) were all hostile and supported the resistance movement in Cambodia, and even the USSR, which had consistently backed Vietnam against China, was drastically reducing its aid.

(d) Vietnam changes course

In 1986 Vietnam was in serious crisis. Internationally isolated, the regime had a vast permanent army of around one million, which was cripplingly expensive to maintain; it had still not succeeded in introducing a viable socialist economy in the south. With the deaths of the older party leaders, younger members were able to convince the party of the need for drastic policy changes, and in particular the need to extricate themselves from Cambodia. At the Third National Congress of the Communist Party (December 1986), a leading economic reformer, Nguyen Van Linh, was appointed as general secretary. He introduced a new doctrine known as *Doi Moi*, which meant *renewing the economy*, *as the Chinese had already begun to do*, *by moving towards the free market*, in an attempt to raise living standards to the level enjoyed by Vietnam's neighbours.

Agreement was at last reached over Cambodia: Vietnamese troops were withdrawn in September 1989 and the task of finding a permanent settlement was handed over to the UN (see next section). This was a great relief for the regime, since it freed vast sums of revenue which could now be invested in the economy. Even so, economic progress was slow, and it was several years before the population felt much benefit. One of the problems was the rapidly growing population, which reached almost 80 million at the end of the century (in 1950 it had been around 17 million).

Signs of progress were more obvious during the early years of the new century. In July 2000 the country's first stock exchange was opened in Ho Chi Minh City, and important steps were taken towards reconciliation with the USA. A trade agreement was signed allowing American goods to be imported into Vietnam in exchange for lower duties on Vietnamese goods entering the USA; in November, President Clinton paid a visit to Vietnam as part of a publicity drive to encourage closer business and cultural ties.

In 2001 the Communist Party appointed a new general secretary, Nong Duc Manh. This was the country's most powerful leadership post. Nong had a reputation as a reformer and modernizer; one of his first announcements was that he was aiming for Vietnam to

become an industrialized power by 2020. A new target of a 7.5 per cent annual growth rate was announced for the next five years. Equality was to be given to the private sector of the economy; according to a government directive, 'all economic sectors are important components of the socialist-oriented market economy'. In an attempt to reduce corruption, all party and government officials were required to declare publicly their assets and interests. Work began on a new hydro-electric scheme in the north, which would both provide power and help to control flooding. Another encouraging development was the expansion of tourism – it was revealed that over 2 million people had visited the country in 2000. In December 2002 it was announced that the economy had almost reached its target, growing by 7 per cent during the year. Industrial production had risen by 14 per cent, which was mainly due to a sharp increase in the manufacture of motor-cycles and cars. In October 2003, the UN World Food Programme welcomed Vietnam's first-ever contribution – a consignment of rice for Iraq. *Vietnam was now an international donor of aid instead of having to be a recipient.*

At the same time, Vietnam was becoming less isolated. In 2001, as well as closer relations with the USA, links were formed with Russia, China and the ASEAN countries. President Putin of Russia paid a visit and agreement was reached about economic co-operation and sales of Russian arms. There were visits from the Chinese leaders Hu Jintao and Li Peng, and Vietnam hosted several meetings of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

Although Vietnam seemed to have successfully reformed its command economy, following the Chinese model, very little change took place in the political system. Vietnam remained a one-party state, with the Communist Party dominating and controlling everything. For example, in the elections held in May 2002, 498 MPs were elected from 759 candidates; 51 of those elected were not members of the Communist Party and two were described as 'independents'. However, all the candidates had to be vetted and approved by the Party; no other political parties were allowed, and although the newly elected National Assembly might be more critical of ministers than previously, there was no possibility of the communists being defeated.

In 2002 and 2003 there were disturbing reports of human rights abuses, especially persecution of religious groups, including Buddhists and Christians. A Protestant evangelical Christian group known as the Montagnards were the main target. Their members complained of beatings, torture and detention on charges of 'reactionary behaviour'. Churches were burnt down and at least one Christian was beaten to death. Several hundred fled into Cambodia, where they lived in refugee camps. The Vietnamese government demanded that they should be sent back to Vietnam. By the end of 2003, Vietnam's foreign relations were beginning to suffer: the USA and the European Union made official protests about the persecution and the USA offered asylum to the Montagnards. However, the Vietnamese government rejected the protests and claimed that the reports were 'totally false and slanderous'. Nong was chosen for a second five-year term in 2006.

19.3 CAMBODIA/KAMPUCHEA

(a) Prince Sihanouk

Before the Second World War, Cambodia was a French protectorate with its own king, Monivong (reigned 1927–41), although the French allowed him very little power. Monivong was succeeded by his 18-year-old grandson Norodom Sihanouk, but from 1941 until 1945 Cambodia was under Japanese occupation. In March 1945, as the Japanese defeat became inevitable, *Sihanouk proclaimed Cambodia an independent state*; however, French troops soon returned, and he had to accept a reversion to the position that had existed before the

war. Sihanouk was a shrewd politician; he believed that French rule would not survive long and was prepared to bide his time rather than use force. While the struggle for independence raged in neighbouring Vietnam, *Cambodia was relatively peaceful*. He placed himself at the head of the nationalist movement, avoided involvement in any political party, and soon won respect and popularity with a wide cross-section of Cambodian society.

In 1954, after the French defeat in Vietnam, the Geneva Conference recognized the independence of Cambodia, and Sihanouk's government as the rightful authority. Although he was immensely popular with ordinary people as the architect of peace and independence, many of the intelligentsia resented his growing authoritarianism. *The opposition included pro-democracy groups and the Communist Party*, *formed in 1951*, *which eventually became known as the Communist Party of Kampuchea*. Sihanouk founded his own political party, 'the People's Socialist Community', and in March 1955 he took the remarkable step of abdicating in favour of his father, Norodom Suramarit, so that he himself could play a full part in politics, as plain Mr Sihanouk (though he continued to be popularly known as Prince Sihanouk).

His new party won a total landslide victory in the subsequent elections, taking every seat in the National Assembly. Prince Sihanouk took the title of prime minister, and when his father died in 1960, he became head of state, but did not take the title of king. Given his continuing popularity, the opposition parties, especially the communists (now calling themselves *the Khmer Rouge*), made very little headway, and Sihanouk remained in power for the next 15 years. His rule succeeded in being authoritarian and benign at the same time, and *the country enjoyed a period of peace and reasonable prosperity* while, for much of this time, Vietnam was torn by civil war.

Unfortunately, *Sihanouk's foreign policy antagonized the USA*. He distrusted US motives and suspected that Thailand and South Vietnam – both American allies – had designs on Cambodia. He tried to remain neutral in international affairs; he avoided accepting American aid and was encouraged in this attitude by President de Gaulle of France, whom he admired. As the war in Vietnam escalated, Sihanouk realized that the Vietnamese communists were likely to win in the end; he agreed to allow the Vietnamese communists to use bases in Cambodia, as well as the Ho Chi Minh trail through Cambodian territory, which the Vietminh used for moving troops and supplies from the communist north to the south. Since he was powerless to prevent this anyway, it seemed the most sensible policy. However, the Americans started to bomb Cambodian villages near the border with Vietnam, and consequently in May 1965 Sihanouk broke off relations with the USA. At the same time he began to move towards a closer relationship with China.

(b) Prince Sihanouk overthrown: Cambodia at war (1970–5)

In the late 1960s Sihanouk's popularity waned. Right-wingers resented his anti-American stance and his collaboration with the Vietnamese communists, while the left and the communists opposed his authoritarian methods. The communists, under the leadership of *Saloth Sar (who later called himself Pol Pot)*, a teacher in Phnom Penh, the capital, before he left to organize the Party, were becoming stronger. In 1967 they provoked an uprising among peasants in the north of the country, which frightened Sihanouk into thinking that a communist revolution was imminent. He overreacted, using troops to quell the uprising; villages were burned, and suspected troublemakers were murdered or imprisoned without trial. He further discredited himself with the left by reopening diplomatic relations with the USA. Clashes between Cambodian communist guerrillas (the Khmer Rouge) and Sihanouk's army increased, becoming almost daily events.

Worse still, the new American president, Richard Nixon, and his security adviser Henry Kissinger began large-scale bombings of Vietnamese bases in Cambodia. As the

communists moved deeper inside the country, the bombers followed and Cambodian civilian casualties mounted. By 1970 the leading anti-communists decided that drastic action was needed. In March 1970, while Sihanouk was visiting Moscow, General Lon Nol and his supporters, backed by the Americans, staged a coup. Sihanouk was overthrown; he took refuge in Beijing, and Lon Nol became head of the government.

Lon Nol's period in power (1970–5) was a disaster for Cambodia. He had rashly promised to drive Vietcong forces out of the country, but this drew Cambodia into the thick of the Vietnam War. Almost immediately American and South Vietnamese troops invaded eastern Cambodia, while over the next three years, heavy US bombing pounded the countryside, destroying hundreds of villages. However, the Americans failed to destroy either the Vietcong or Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, both of which continued to harass American forces. Even Sihanouk's supporters joined the struggle against the invaders.

In January 1973, peace came to Vietnam, but the Americans continued a massive aerial bombardment of Cambodia, in a final attempt to prevent the Khmer Rouge from coming to power. During March, April and May 1973, the tonnage of bombs dropped on Cambodia was more than double that of the whole of the previous year. Yet the USA and Cambodia were not at war, and no American troops were being threatened by Cambodians. Cambodia's infrastructure, such as it was, and its traditional economy, were all but destroyed. After the Americans called off the bombings, the civil war continued for a further two years, as the Khmer Rouge gradually closed in on Lon Nol's government in Phnom Penh. In April 1975, Lon Nol's regime collapsed, the Khmer Rouge entered the capital, and *Pol Pot became the ruler of Cambodia*.

(c) Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge

The new government called the country 'Democratic Kampuchea', a completely inappropriate term, in view of what happened over the next four years. Prince Sihanouk, who had worked with the Khmer Rouge during the previous five years, returned home from Beijing, expecting to be well received by Pol Pot. Instead he was placed under house arrest and forced to watch helplessly as Pol Pot exercised total power. The Khmer Rouge caused even more misery for the unfortunate people of Cambodia by trying to introduce doctrinaire Marxist/Leninist principles almost overnight without adequate preparation. In the words of Michael Leifer:

> Under the leadership of the fearsome Pol Pot, a gruesome social experiment was inaugurated. Cambodia was transformed into a primitive agricultural work camp combining the worst excesses of Stalin and Mao in which around a million people died from execution, starvation and disease.

The communists ordered the population of Phnom Penh and other cities to move out, live in the countryside and wear peasant working clothes. Within a short time, the urban centres were virtually empty, and thousands of people were dying in what amounted to forced marches. The aim was to collectivize the entire country immediately, in order to double the rice harvest. Even Mao had taken years to get to this stage in China. But the party cadres whose job it was to organize the transformation were inexperienced and incompetent and most city dwellers were helpless in rural settings. The whole operation was a disaster and conditions became unbearable. At the same time, money, private property, shops and markets were abolished, and schools, hospitals and monasteries closed. Pol Pot's next move was to launch a campaign of genocide against all educated Cambodians and against anybody he thought might be capable of leading opposition. The result – an entire generation of educated people was either killed or driven into exile. In

his controversial 2005 biography of Pol Pot, Philip Short argues that these atrocities were not the product of either a sociopathic dictator or his Marxist ideology, but of Cambodian popular culture which had a long history of violent extremism. During Pol's own school-days in the 1950s, naughty children were severely beaten and their wounds exposed to red ants. Previous royalist and republican governments had regularly tortured, raped and murdered on a huge scale. In the words of Tim Stanley in his review of the biography:

> Short is correct that there is something so uniquely insane about the Khmer genocide that national character is the only way of understanding its eccentric development. Neighbouring Vietnam and Laos experienced war and terror at the same time but never attempted such a radical social solution.

As his paranoia increased, hundreds of Pol Pot's more moderate supporters began to turn against him. Many were executed and many more fled to Thailand and Vietnam. These included *Hun Sen*, a former Khmer Rouge military commander, who organized an anti-Pol Pot army of Cambodian exiles in Vietnam. Some estimates put the total of those who died in the notorious 'killing fields' as high as 2 million; just over a third of the total population of 7.5 million disappeared. The tragedy was, as J. A. S. Grenville puts it, that 'if the Americans had not turned against Sihanouk, one of the cleverest and wiliest of south-east Asian leaders, Cambodia might have been spared the almost unbelievable horrors that followed'.

Eventually Pol Pot contributed to his own downfall: he tried to cover up the failings of his economic policies by adopting a brash nationalistic foreign policy. This caused unnecessary tensions with Vietnam, whose government was anxious for a close relationship with its communist neighbour. After a number of border incidents and provocations by the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia and drove out the Pol Pot regime (January 1979). They installed a puppet government in Phnom Penh, in which *Hun Sen was a leading figure*. Most of the country was occupied by Vietnamese troops until 1989. Meanwhile, Pol Pot and a large army of Khmer Rouge guerrillas retreated into the mountains of the south-west and continued to cause trouble. *The new regime was a great improvement on Pol Pot's murderous government*, *but it was not recognized by the USA and most other countries*. According to Anthony Parsons (see Further Reading for Chapter 9), the UK permanent representative at the UN,

> instead of receiving a public vote of thanks from the UN for ridding Cambodia of a latter-day combination of Hitler and Stalin, and saving the lives of countless Cambodians, the Vietnamese found themselves on the receiving end of draft resolutions in January and March 1979 calling for a cease-fire and the withdrawal of 'foreign forces'.

However, the USSR supported Vietnam and vetoed the resolutions, so no further action was taken. The reason for the UN's anti-Vietnam stance was that the USA and the non-communist states of south-east Asia were more afraid of a powerful Vietnam than they were of the Khmer Rouge. For the sake of their own interests, they would have preferred to see Pol Pot's regime continue in power.

(d) After Pol Pot: The return of Prince Sihanouk

The new government in Phnom Penh consisted mainly of moderate communists who had deserted Pol Pot. Uncertainty about what might happen under the new regime caused perhaps half a million Cambodians, including former communists and members of the

intelligentsia, to leave the country and take refuge in Thailand. As it turned out, although it was kept in power by Vietnamese troops, *the government could claim considerable success over the next ten years*. The extreme Khmer Rouge policies were abandoned, people were allowed to return to the towns and cities, schools and hospitals reopened, and Buddhists were allowed to practise their religion. Later, money and private property were restored, the economy settled down and trade started up again.

The government's main problem was opposition from resistance groups operating from over the border in Thailand. There were three main groups: the Khmer Rouge, who were still a formidable force of some 35 000; Prince Sihanouk and his armed supporters, numbering about 18 000; and the non-communist National Liberation Front led by Son Sann, who could muster around 8000 troops. In 1982 the three groups formed a joint government-in-exile with Sihanouk as president and Son Sann as prime minister. The UN officially recognized them as the rightful government, but they received very little support from ordinary Cambodians, who seemed happy with the existing regime in Phnom Penh. Hun Sen became prime minister in 1985, and the opposition made no headway.

The situation changed towards the end of the 1980s as it became clear that Vietnam could no longer afford to keep a large military force in Cambodia. For a time there was the frightful possibility that the Khmer Rouge might seize power again when the Vietnamese withdrew. But the other two opposition groups, as well as Hun Sen, were determined not to let this happen. They all agreed to take part in talks organized by the UN. The ending of the Cold War made it easier to reach a settlement, and *agreement was reached in October 1991*.

- There was to be a transitional government known as the Supreme National Council, consisting of representatives of all four factions, including the Khmer Rouge.
- UN troops and administrators were to help prepare the country for democratic elections in 1993.

The Supreme National Council elected Prince Sihanouk as president, and a large UN team of 16 000 troops and 6000 civilians arrived to demobilize the rival armies and make arrangements for the elections. Progress was far from easy, mainly because the Khmer Rouge, which saw its chances of regaining power slipping away, refused to co-operate or take part in the elections.

Nevertheless the elections went ahead in June 1993; the royalist party led by Prince Ranariddh, Sihanouk's son, emerged as the largest group, with Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CCP) second. Hun Sen, who had difficulty forgetting his undemocratic past, refused to give up power. The UN found a clever solution by setting up a coalition government with Ranariddh as first prime minister and Hun Sen as second prime minister. *One of the first acts of the new National Assembly was to vote to restore the monarchy, and Prince Sihanouk became king and head of state once again*.

From this point onwards the political history of Cambodia consisted largely of a bizarre feud between the royalists and the supporters of Hun Sen. In July 1997, Hun Sen, with the elections of July 1998 in mind, removed Ranariddh in a violent coup; the prince was tried and found guilty, in absentia, of attempting to overthrow the government. He had apparently been trying to enlist help from what was left of the Khmer Rouge. However, he was pardoned by his father, the king, and was able to take part in the 1998 elections. This time, Hun Sen's CPP emerged as the largest single party, but lacking an overall majority, they once again joined together in an uneasy coalition with the royalists.

As for the Khmer Rouge, their support gradually dwindled; in 1995 many of them had accepted the government's offer of an amnesty. *In 1997 Pol Pot was arrested by other Khmer Rouge leaders and sentenced to life imprisonment*. He died the following year. The question of how to deal with the surviving members of the Pol Pot regime caused

controversy. There was a general feeling that they should be prosecuted for crimes against humanity, but there was no consensus about how this should be done. The UN, supported by King Sihanouk, wanted them tried by an international tribunal; Hun Sen wanted them dealt with by the Cambodian legal system, but the UN felt that this lacked the expertise to carry out effective prosecutions. No progress was made.

Meanwhile the country remained calm; in 2000 the economy seemed well balanced, inflation was under control and tourism was becoming increasingly important, with almost half a million foreign visitors during the year. In 2001 the World Bank provided financial aid for the government but, significantly, urged Hun Sen to make more determined efforts to eliminate corruption. In the autumn and winter of 2002–3, there were serious food shortages after extremes of drought and flooding caused the rice crop to fail.

At the same time the leading politicians were preparing for the elections due in July 2003. They were to be contested by three main parties: Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party, Ranariddh's royalist party and a liberal opposition group led by Sam Rangsi. The months before the election were marked by a spate of assassinations of leading members of all three parties; 31 people died, and tensions continued between Prime Minister Hun Sen and the royal family. *The result of the July election led to a constitutional crisis*: the CPP won 73 of the 123 seats in the National Assembly, the lower house of the Cambodian parliament; the royalists 26 and the Sam Rangsi party 24. This left the CPP nine seats short of the two-thirds majority needed to form a government. Foreign observers reported that the CPP had been guilty of violent intimidation and had also used 'a more subtle strategy of coercion and intimidation'. The two smaller parties refused to join a coalition with the CPP unless Hun Sen resigned, but he consistently refused.

In the months following the election, the violence and assassinations continued; the victims were either members or well-known supporters of the opposition parties. Hun Sen simply continued to run the country and was still in power in 2012. The country was in a far from healthy state. Although there had been some economic growth since 2006, Cambodia still relied on foreign aid for about half the government's budget. According to a report by the International Food Policy Research Institute, *in 2009 the country ranked alongside the poorest nations in Africa for deficiencies in nutrition.* One of the problems was that, whereas Vietnam and Thailand attract multi-million-dollar foreign investment, very few Western investors would even consider Cambodia, because of the violence and the high crime rate. Vast sums of money are still needed for healthcare, basic education and infrastructure.

19.4 LAOS

(a) Independence and civil war

Laos, the third country in former French Indo-China, was organized as a French protectorate with its capital at Vientiane. After the Japanese occupation during the Second World War, the French gave Laos a measure of self-government under King Sisavang Vong, but all important decisions were still taken in Paris. Many of the Lao leaders were satisfied with limited independence, but in 1950 the convinced nationalists formed a new movement known as the *Pathet Lao* (Land of the Lao People), to fight for full independence. The Pathet Lao worked closely with the Vietminh in Vietnam, who were also fighting the French, and they were strong in the north of the country in the provinces adjoining North Vietnam.

The 1954 Geneva Accords, which ended French rule in Indo-China, decided that *Laos should continue to be ruled by the royal government*. However, it also allowed what it called regroupment zones in northern Laos, where the Pathet Lao forces could assemble. Presumably the intention was that they would negotiate with the royal government about their future. But the outcome was inevitable: the Pathet Lao, with its strong left-wing

connections and its continuing links with communist North Vietnam, was unlikely to remain at peace for long with a right-wing royalist government. In fact a fragile peace did survive until 1959, but then fighting broke out between left and right, and continued off and on until it became part of the much larger conflict in Vietnam. *During these years, Laos was divided into three groups*:

- the Pathet Lao – mainly communist, backed by North Vietnam and China;
- the right-wing anti-communists and royalists, backed by Thailand and the USA;
- a neutralist group led by *Prince Souvanna Phouma*, which tried to bring peace by creating a coalition of all three factions, each of which would be left in control of the areas that they held.

In July 1962 a fragile coalition government of all three groups was formed, and for a time it seemed that Laos might be able to remain neutral in the developing conflict in Vietnam. The USA was unhappy with this situation because it meant that the communist Pathet Lao controlled key areas of Laos which bordered on Vietnam (and through which the Ho Chi Minh trail would later pass). The Americans poured in vast amounts of financial aid for the Laotian Royal Army and *in April 1964 the neutralist coalition government was overthrown by the right*, *with CIA backing*. A new government of mainly right-wingers and a few neutralists was formed; the Pathet Lao were excluded, although they were still strong in their areas. Since they were well organized and well equipped, they soon began to extend their control further.

As the war in Vietnam escalated, Laos began to suffer the same fate as Cambodia. Between 1965 and 1973 more than 2 million tons of US bombs were dropped on Laos, more than were dropped on Germany and Japan during the Second World War. At first the attacks were mainly on provinces controlled by the Pathet Lao; as support for the Pathet Lao increased and their control extended further, so the American bombings spread over more of the country. An American community worker in Laos later reported that 'village after village was levelled; countless people were buried alive by high explosives, or burnt alive by napalm and white phosphorous, or riddled by anti-personnel bomb pellets'.

Peace returned to Laos only in 1973 with the withdrawal of the Americans from Vietnam. The three factions signed an agreement in Vientiane setting up another coalition, with Souvanna Phouma as the leader. However, the Pathet Lao gradually extended their control over more of the country. In 1975, when the North Vietnamese took over South Vietnam, and the Khmer Rouge gained control in Cambodia, the right-wing forces in Laos decided to throw in the towel and their leaders left the country. The Pathet Lao were able to take power, and in December 1975 they *declared the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*.

(b) The Lao People's democratic republic

The communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), which took control in 1975, stayed in power for the rest of the century and still seemed secure in 2004. For 20 years before they came to power, their leaders had worked in close co-operation with their allies in Vietnam, and it was only to be expected that the two governments would follow similar paths. In Laos the communists introduced farming collectives and brought trade, and what little industry there was, under government control. They also imprisoned several thousand political opponents in what were called re-education camps. The country and the economy were slow to recover from the ravages of the previous 15 years, and thousands of people – some estimates put the total at around 10 per cent of the population – left the country to live in Thailand.

Fortunately, the government was prepared to compromise its strict Marxist principles; in the mid-1980s, following the example of China and Vietnam, the collectivization programme was abandoned and replaced by groups of family-run farms. State control over business and industry was relaxed, market incentives were introduced and private investment was invited and encouraged. UN statistics suggested that by 1989 the economy of Laos was performing better than those of Vietnam and Cambodia in terms of Gross National Product per head. The Party still kept full political control, but after the introduction of a new constitution in 1991, people were allowed more freedom of movement. The fact that the government, like those of China and Vietnam, had abandoned its communist or socialist economic policies raised the interesting question of whether or not it still *was* a communist regime. The leaders still seemed to think of themselves and describe themselves as having communist political systems, and yet their economic restructuring had left them with very few specifically socialist attributes. They could just as well be called simply 'one-party states'.

At the end of the century Laos was still a one-party state, with a mixed economy which was performing disappointingly. In March 2001, President Khamtai Siphandon admitted that the government had so far failed to bring about the hoped-for increase in prosperity. He outlined an impressive 20-year programme of economic growth and improved education, health and living standards. Impartial analysts pointed out that the economy was precarious, foreign aid to Laos had doubled over the previous 15 years, and the International Monetary Fund had just approved a loan of $40 million to help balance the budget for the year.

None of this made any difference to the National Assembly elections held in February 2002. There were 166 candidates for the 109 seats, but all except one were members of the LPRP. The state-run media reported that there had been a 100 per cent turnout and the Party continued blithely in power. Nevertheless, *dissatisfaction with the lack of progress was beginning to cause some unrest*. In July 2003 an organization called the Lao Citizens' Movement for Democracy held demonstrations and mini-uprisings in ten provinces. In October another group, calling itself the Free Democratic People's Government of Laos (FDPGL), exploded a bomb in Vientiane and claimed responsibility for 14 other explosions since 2000. They announced that their aim was to overthrow 'the cruel and barbarian LPRP'. The pressure was on for the Party to deliver reform and prosperity without too much delay. In 2006 a new leader came to power: Choummaly Sayasone was chosen as Communist Party general secretary and president of Laos.

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Part

IV

The United States of America

Chapter

20 USA boom and bust: 1900–29

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

While the United States entered the new century perhaps not quite ready to assume a leadership role in the world in a military sense, in economic matters, American supremacy was increasingly self-evident. And as the years passed it would become clear that the two elements were inseparable. Many Americans felt reassured that Europe with its toxic relations and arms races was thousands of miles away and hoped that America could isolate itself from Europe's affairs for as long as possible. But it was their country's destiny to become the pre-eminent power in every sense. As the American economy grew, so too did the extent of its political and military influence. In 1917 the United States entered the Great War against Germany and played a key role not just in bringing the conflict to an end but also in shaping a controversial peace.

International events were not the only demand upon the American psyche. In the 1920s, a surge in nativism, the rise of organized crime, religious fundamentalism and wide variations in economic well-being, all raised fundamental questions about the health of American society. Nevertheless, it was the economic boom of the 1920s that for many people seemed to exemplify the decade. The rapid rise of the automobile industry was perhaps the stand-out facet of an economy that at one point seemed destined to carry all before it. The inter-connectedness of the world economy was becoming clearer, as in Europe and beyond, America exerted cultural, economic and political influence across the globe. And then came the events of 1929. The Wall Street Crash of October 1929 symbolized the down-turn that would bring global economic shock-waves, but the reality was that the American economy had serious flaws way beyond the financiers of New York City. As the world buckled under the economic strain the disadvantages of an over-reliance on American enterprise and growth became more obvious by the day. The global depression had been made in America.

20.1 AMERICA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It was the small hours of September 14th 1901 and the weather in the Adirondacks was typically hostile.

The horse-drawn carriage was clattering down the hazardous route from Mount Marcy to North Creek station with apparent disregard for the welfare of its precious human cargo. In fact, it was the forty-two years old passenger rather than the driver who urged a lack of restraint. He was all too aware that his stricken chief was critically wounded and unlikely to cling to life for much longer. But the sombre reality was that no amount of urgency could rescue President McKinley. A year into his vice presidency, Theodore Roosevelt had been thrust into the limelight he craved and was about to be sworn in as the twenty-sixth president of the United States. More than a century later, Roosevelt's

reputation as perhaps the most energetic holder of the greatest office remains intact. Where his predecessor was cautious, the new president was bursting with ambition. Roosevelt took charge of a country whose natural resources, dynamic people and rapidly growing population would make the twentieth century synonymous with the American century. It seemed a perfect match.

A rapid growth in population was at the centre of the rise of modern America. In 1900, the United States covered a total area of more than 3 million square miles. In that space lived a population of 76,212,168 people. More than 66 million people from that total were white (87 per cent) with 8.8 million people of colour (11.9 per cent). Each of the closing decades of the nineteenth century had witnessed a rapid increase in population. Between 1880 and 1890, the decennial increase was 25.5 per cent; in the last decade of the nineteenth century, it was 20.7 per cent. Just a century later, in 2000 the US population was calculated to be 281,421,906. The rapid rise of American society was based, not least, on the foundation stone of fertility. America's cultural drive to raise a family was the single most important factor behind the nation's rapid population growth.

Meanwhile, across its southern border, demand for cheap labour and employment 'opportunities' in agriculture and fruit-harvesting acted as a magnet to the Mexican people in the same way that attracted millions of people from eastern Europe. Most of these new arrivals were Catholic. But in a land where evangelical Protestant values were of fundamental importance, prejudice against Catholics was widespread. The new immigrants encountered organized hostility, ranging from the American Protective Association in the 1890s to the revived Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Anti-Catholic sentiment and in some quarters aggressive nativism was seldom far from the surface. The land of liberty was also a place of paradox.

(a) Women and suffrage

America's economic modernity was not universally reflected in attitudes towards women in general and towards the issue of female suffrage in particular. Two organizations led the way in demanding the vote for women. In 1869 Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony established the National Association for Woman Suffrage. The American Woman Suffrage Association led by Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone immediately followed. In 1890 the two groups acknowledged the value of joining forces and created the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Despite their efforts, by the turn of the century only four states (Idaho, Colorado, Utah and Wyoming) had given women the same voting rights as men. The jarring fact that the land of liberty denied the vote to most women was one of numerous contradictions. If women were treated badly, then indigenous peoples fared even worse. In 1850 there were approximately a quarter of a million American Indians farming and hunting in the western United States. By 1890 a combination of wars, treaties and the destruction of the buffalo meant that they had been deprived of all but a tiny section of their former lands. At the direct expense of this indigenous people, the population living in the west expanded from 179,000 in 1850 to 4.3 million by 1890. Problems of low esteem, poverty and disease became a scourge that would plague American Indians throughout the twentieth century. To be clear, the empire that held the principle of liberty so dear to its heart was at the same time responsible for the genocide of Native Americans.

(b) The American economy in 1900

Rapid population growth stimulated societal change on an unprecedented scale. In 1900, the last ever horse-car to be used in the United States made its final run in Washington, DC, the nation's capital. In the same year, Bloomingdale's department store in New York

City proudly opened its first elevator. In the same city, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show opened at Madison Square Garden. Meanwhile, in baseball, the American League was formed as a rival to the mighty National League. A nation that in the nineteenth century had been predominantly rural in character was by the turn of the century hurtling at an exhilarating pace to its destiny as the industrial and financial powerhouse of the capitalist world. Although agricultural output was plentiful the percentage of the labour force employed in agriculture had sharply declined from 53 per cent in 1870 to 37.5 per cent in 1900. Cities such as New York, Boston and Chicago became the equal of their great European counterparts. The World's Fair, which opened in Chicago in 1893, was a celebration of American technological progress. One Harvard historian commented that 'the new American – the child of incalculable coal power, chemical power, electrical power, and radiating energy – must be a sort of God compared with any former creature of nature' (Whiteclay Chambers II, 1992 P.2). But the label hides the grotesque degree of inequality between rich and poor that was such a characteristic of this time. In Jill Lepore's elegant phrase 'industrialism brought great, glittering wealth to a few, prosperity to the nation, cheaper goods to the middle class, and misery and want to the many' (Lepore, 2018 p.362).

As Jefferson had once predicted, the republic had moved on to 'destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye'. America's economic performance at the turn of the century was, by any reckoning, outstanding. Vast areas of fertile agricultural land enabled American farmers to increase wheat output by 256 per cent and corn by 222 per cent between 1865 and 1898. Modern farming techniques and transport systems made food supplies plentiful and cheap. Industrial development was equally impressive. Coal production increased by 800 per cent between the end of the Civil War and 1898. In the same period, new railway track increased by 567 per cent. In 1869 construction workers on the Union Pacific railroad and the Central Pacific came together at Promontory, Utah, to mark the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Between 1880 and 1890, growth in railway mileage increased by an average of 7,000 miles per year.

The sheer pace of American technological development should be credited to a great extent to the ordinary men and women (and in some cases, even children) who were employed in the emerging industries of the late nineteenth century. The artisan and agricultural economy that still existed in 1865 was swept aside by the bare hands and energy of humble labourers and railway navvies. Cheap labour was fundamental to rapid growth. America was also fortunate to have some outstanding individuals whose leadership and investment helped to create what Charles Morris has called the American super-economy. Entrepreneurs such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller Jay Gould and J.P Morgan transformed the economic landscape. A major biography of Thomas Edison shows how *the* inventive genius of the American economy pushed his 'already hyperactive metabolism to the point that he could work fifty-four hours at a stretch' (Morris, 2019, Prologue). The result of the collective effort of the humble worker and the barons of industry was staggering. When the immense British Empire went to war with Germany in 1914 it would need to borrow American money.

20.2 THE TRANSITION FROM AN AGRARIAN TO AN INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

Before the Civil War, the Southern economy was predominantly rural, dominated by cotton and resting on the horrific institution of slavery. After the great struggle the southern economy began to diversify. The 'New South' was a region of cities, factories and blast furnaces. The census of 1860 listed five out of every six Americans as being 'rural dwellers'. Within forty years, the country had become predominantly industrial. In the cities, neighbourhoods reflected a wide variety of backgrounds, with differences of language,

race and religion. The new century saw a gradual increase in the rise of working women. In 1900, the number of working women stood at 5,319,000, or 18.3 per cent of the total working population. By 1930, this had increased to 10,752,000, or 22 per cent of the total working population. Most women remained in poorly paid, menial occupations. With the exception of teaching and nursing, women were still largely absent from the professions.

(a) The development of the American city

The distinctive character of America's cities was shaped in the late nineteenth century. Central business districts, ethnic restaurants, baseball fields and saloons were almost universal features. Steel frameworks and elevators enabled architects to build increasingly ambitious skyscrapers. Urban development brought with it brutal working conditions, squalid housing and violent crime. Unparalleled growth led to the existence of large-scale slums, which inevitably gave rise to serious health problems and social deprivation. In response city authorities began to build upwards. High-rise buildings were first constructed in Chicago in the rebuilding process which followed the great fire of 1871. This solution was then adopted in cities such as New York in the 1880s. Rates of infectious diseases were alarming. Statistics from the National Center for Health between 1900 and 1904 show a high incidence of typhoid fever and diphtheria and tuberculosis. Between 1820 and 1930, 37,762,012 immigrants entered the United States. Of this total, 32,121,210 came from Europe. The vast majority of these newcomers headed straight for the largest cities. However, the massive volume of immigrants began to make some Americans question the tradition of unconditional asylum. Anti-immigrant sentiment had several different strands. One recurring feature was the hostility of the American work force against what they saw as cheap foreign labour. The first specific piece of anti-immigrant legislation came in 1882 with the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which placed a ten-year embargo on the admission of immigrants from China. In 1902 the Chinese Exclusion Act became permanent and six years later Japanese immigrants faced further restrictions.

1 The Presidency: From Progressivism to the New Freedom

For the nation as a whole, the turmoil of the Civil War, marked by the deaths of more than 600,000 people, had been left behind, as had the institution of slavery. The political system was intact and democracy was well established. Two political parties, the Democratic Party dating back to the Presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829–37), and the Republican Party, which was established in 1854, dominated the political scene. In the election of 1900, for example, the Republican and Democratic candidates accumulated more than 13 million votes while in third place a Prohibition candidate received a mere 208,914 votes.

20.3 THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE ORIGINS OF THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

Roosevelt was born to a wealthy family in New York City in 1858. He was elected Governor of New York in 1898 and nominated as Vice Presidential candidate on the Republican ticket in June 1900. The McKinley-Roosevelt ticket secured 7,207,923 votes compared to the Democrats 6,358,138 for Bryan and Stevenson. On 6 September 1901, President William McKinley visited the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo in New York. As he stood in line meeting the public, a Polish anarchist named Leon Czolgosz stepped forward and shot him twice at point-blank range. McKinley clung to life for a week but died on 14 September. With the president's administration brutally curtailed, it

fell to his successor, Theodore Roosevelt to provide the leadership needed to galvanize the Progressive movement. Not yet forty-three, he became the youngest President in the nation's history. It was only when the ambition of the new president was brought to bear that the picture of a modern presidency recognizable to us today began to come into focus. Three years later the Republican Party nominated Roosevelt to run for the Presidency in his own right. His popularity was reflected in his majority of 2.5 million over the Democratic candidate and the securing of 336 votes in the Electoral College.

(a) President Theodore Roosevelt and the origins of Progressivism

1 The rise of Progressivism

The sentiment that sweeping reforms were needed across a broad range of American society expressed itself in what became known as the 'Progressive movement', which was influential across the nation between 1900 and 1919. Progressives wanted reform, believed in bureaucratic solutions and advocated state intervention through government agencies. Key elements in the origins of this movement included the notion of building on prosperity. When influential figures in American society examined their country at the turn of the nineteenth century, they saw immense wealth which led many to believe that the time was ripe for further improvements. Progressives were keenly aware of society's ills. Most were middle class and they perceived disturbing signs that not everyone affected by poor conditions was content to go on merely accepting their lot. Roosevelt referred in his Inaugural Address to the dire consequences which could afflict American society if root and branch reform was not implemented. Many progressives were alarmed by the rapid rise of the radical left, exemplified by the foundation of the Socialist Party of America in 1901. Meanwhile, books such as Lincoln Steffen's *The Shame of the Cities* exposed widespread political graft, a further reason for progressives to search for improvement.

2 The Roosevelt administration

When Roosevelt entered the Oval Office in 1901 he presided over a country of great extremes of wealth and poverty. As a New York politician he had roamed the slums at night, armed with a pistol and eager to witness for himself the poverty which so many Americans endured. Yet at the same time, the country for which he now had responsibility had given rise to almost 4,000 millionaires. Roosevelt's belief was that the creation of gigantic conglomerates, or trusts, was not necessarily in the public interest – for example, a large railroad trust might result in price-fixing. Huge corporations could exploit their work force or perpetuate unacceptable working practices. Whereas his predecessors had been content to let big business have its way, Roosevelt came to the highest office with the drive needed to redress the balance. By the time he left office in 1909, his administration had issued suits against over forty corporations, including the Standard Oil Company and the American Tobacco Company. The outcome was more competitive prices and better standards in public transport. His legislation in the food industry addressed serious problems of hygiene and public safety. His work in conservation produced more forest land, irrigation schemes and dam building.

20.4 THE TAFT ADMINISTRATION

Roosevelt's popularity meant that he could have stood for election again in 1908. However, his respect for the long-standing two-term tradition led him to promise that the 1904 campaign would be his last. Even so, he was instrumental in securing the nomination of his political ally William Howard Taft as the next Republican nominee. Taft was

uncomfortable with the hurly-burly of the election campaign and was elected largely because of his close ties to Roosevelt. Taft patently lacked his predecessor's drive. His expertise lay in the legal system and he was less well suited to the political complexities of Washington. His Presidency from 1909 to 1913 became increasingly factious and insignificant.

(a) The presidency of Woodrow Wilson

Woodrow Wilson was first elected to the White House in 1912. A Professor of Jurisprudence, he was elected to the prestigious post of President of Princeton University in 1902, a position which he retained until 1910 when he became Governor of New Jersey. In the presidential race of 1912 Wilson proved an able campaigner and placed emphasis on a programme which he labelled the *New Freedom.* He called for the return of free competition in the marketplace, tariff reduction and reform of the antitrust laws and the banking system. Meanwhile, Roosevelt, who had already served as Republican President from 1901 – upon the death of President McKinley – and elected in his own right in November 1904 to serve until 1909, had left the Republican Party. Stressing to journalists that he felt as strong as a 'Bull Moose' he became the candidate of the Progressive Party. Taft (Republican), who had been a relatively lacklustre President since 1909, was overshadowed by his formidable predecessor and went into the campaign expecting to lose but gaining some comfort from his conviction that the defeat would serve as a lesson to the insurgents. Wilson and Roosevelt dominated the campaign. The most dramatic moment came in October 1912 when Roosevelt was shot by and wounded by a deranged saloonkeeper in Milwaukee. Wilson displayed his astute political instincts by gracefully suspending his own campaign while Roosevelt was ill. It was the final gesture on the way to a decisive victory. Wilson secured the popular vote by an emphatic margin: 6,294,327 to Roosevelt's 4,120, 207 with Taft in third place at 3,486,343. He was inaugurated as President in March 1913 and embarked upon an energetic first term comparable in terms of legislation passed with the great programmes of F. D. Roosevelt and L. B. Johnson. In particular, David Reynolds describes Wilson's creation of the Federal Reserve Act, 'to make the rickety American banking system more stable' as 'perhaps the biggest reform of the progressive era' (Reynolds, 2009 p.281).

20.5 THE 'RED SCARE'

During the feverish atmosphere of the war many Americans directed their hostility towards the country's substantial German–American population. When the war ended this sentiment gave way to a broader mood of xenophobia, heightened by the communist revolution in Russia in October 1917 and directed against anyone with radical ideals. Widespread alarm at the rise of the American communist movement and the American Socialist Party was disproportionate to the size of these organizations and the extent of their activities. An outbreak of industrial unrest, including a five-day general strike in Seattle in February 1919, led to heightened fears of impending social upheaval. With workers seemingly radicalized by the wartime expansion of labour unions an unprecedented attack on capitalism seemed possible. When Boston's illustrious police force went on strike in September 1919, fear of imminent social disintegration became acute. However, the wider public mood turned sharply against the police and the dispute quickly came to an end. Meanwhile, following a series of bomb outrages, culminating in an explosion on Wall Street in 1920, in which thirty-nine people were killed, fear of Bolshevism swept the nation. The wild atmosphere was exacerbated by the actions of the Attorney-General, A. Mitchell Palmer,

himself the victim of an attempted assassination at his Washington home. The nation's most senior lawmaker was possibly motivated by his desire to exploit the national mood as the platform for his personal Presidential ambition. A wave of arrests, in November 1919, the so-called 'Palmer Raids' targeted anarchists and socialists, many of whom were deported to Russia

(a) Sacco and Vanzetti

It was against the 'Red Scare' background of tension and intolerance that the case of Sacco and Vanzetti unfolded. On Christmas Eve 1919, an armed hold-up in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, was thwarted without bloodshed. Then, in April 1920, a raid in nearby South Braintree resulted in the murder of a shoe factory paymaster and a factory guard and the theft of $15,000. Within a month, two immigrant Italians, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were arrested and charged with armed robbery and murder, although there was little firm evidence against them. The case itself was fairly routine and initially attracted little attention. Yet as the trial progressed it emerged that Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists and wartime 'draft-dodgers' while Webster Thayer, the conservative judge who ran proceedings, made little attempt to conceal his distaste for the accused. The police who had arrested Sacco and Vanzetti testified that they had drawn guns, and this was presented as confirmation of their guilt. The prosecution asked the jury to do its duty 'as did our boys in France'.

While the evidence against Sacco and Vanzetti was far from conclusive, it came as little surprise when they were convicted in July 1921 and sentenced to death. The trial was now receiving widespread attention and divided opinion in America. The judge boasted to his friend of what he had done to 'those anarchist bastards'. On the other hand, many writers and left-wingers alerted world opinion to what they felt was an horrendous miscarriage of justice. In April 1927, The Supreme Court of Massachusetts rejected calls for a new trial on the grounds that there had not been 'a failure of justice'. Sacco and Vanzetti were executed by electrocution on 23 August 1927. This was widely condemned in liberal circles and certainly damaged the reputation of the United States abroad. The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti has remained controversial because of the view that they were found guilty primarily because of their radical ideals and their ethnicity rather than of any conclusive evidence.

20.6 THE ELECTION OF 1920 AND THE HARDING ADMINISTRATION

(a) President Wilson's ill-health

Wilson never recovered from the transient ischemic attack he suffered in September 1919. This was a precursor to the serious stroke he suffered the following month. At this time, Wilson's devoted second wife, Edith, protected her husband by acting as a gatekeeper to the President. During what she called 'her stewardship' she decided who could meet with her husband and which official papers could be passed or withheld from him. Albert Fall, a Republican Senator from New Mexico, complained that the United States was now a 'government by petticoat' (Cooper, 2009 p.537). The seriously ill president was now more stubborn than ever. Berg states that 'With another year to his term, Woodrow Wilson became the lamest duck ever to inhabit the White House, residing more than presiding for the rest of his days there' (Berg, 2014 p.679).

(b) The political emergence of Herbert Hoover

The death of Roosevelt in January 1919 and Wilson's poor health removed the two most significant figures of the time from the political landscape. This paved the way, so many insiders thought, for a rising star, the exceptionally industrious Herbert Hoover to be given the Republican nomination. Crucially, at this stage in his career, Hoover was a naïve campaigner. Out of the wreckage of Hoover's amateurish campaign a dark horse emerged. Displaying the political skill of a veteran, Warren Harding, a small-time politician and newspaper editor from Marion, Ohio, secured the nomination and at the same time allowed Hoover to believe that he would support American membership of the League of Nations when he had no intention of doing so. Hoover believed that he had forged an alliance with Harding but the Ohio man had left him for dead. Accepting the Republican nomination in July, Harding made clear that he would be campaigning on an isolationist ticket.

Harding's running mate, Calvin Coolidge, the Governor of Massachusetts, had significantly raised his profile with his timely and high-profile intervention against the Boston Police Strike. This stance had done a great deal to secure his nomination for the Vice Presidency and helped Harding to achieve one of the greatest electoral victories in American history. The Republicans ruthlessly placed the stricken incumbent at the centre of their campaign as they denounced 'Wilson's league'. The result was a catastrophic defeat for the Democrats. Harding secured more than 60 per cent of the popular vote, and the gap in the Electoral College was equally dramatic with 404 to 127. The contrast between Wilson's eloquence and Harding's mind-numbing oratory was there for all to see. An amenable, sociable character, Harding was both unable and unwilling to outgrow his origins. He enjoyed occupying the White House but ultimately found the challenges that lay in wait for him there, overwhelming.

(c) Analysis: Harding–A case for rehabilitation?

While Harding's standing remains low it is now generally acknowledged that the exclusively critical verdict has probably been unfair, and a slight degree of rehabilitation has taken place. It has been noted that Harding's treatment of the Socialist leader Eugene V. Debs, who had been arrested under the terms of President Wilson's Sedition Act, was impressive given the prevailing mood of the country at large. Debs had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment simply for making a speech against the war. Commendably, Harding commuted the sentence and even invited Debs to a personal meeting at the White House. In a period when industrial relations were difficult, Harding supported demands for an eight-hour working day in the steel industry. Despite pressure from the American Legion, Harding vetoed a soldiers' bonus bill in 1922. Finally, despite the prevailing mood of isolationism in foreign affairs, Harding backed the arms limitation which was at the centre of the Washington Conference of 1921–2. Ellis W. Hawley offers an alternative view of the beleaguered Harding administration:

> Historians have long looked upon the Presidency of Warren G. Harding as a major debacle. Often missing from their accounts is the fact that the Harding era also came close to combining full employment and rising living standards with stable prices and international peace. For all the scandals the new administration presided over a series of developments that made the American economy the envy of much of the world.
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> (Hawley, 1979 p.58)

(d) 'The Ohio Gang', the death of Harding and the succession of Coolidge

When he became President, Harding brought with him to Washington a number of his old companions from Marion, Ohio. He enjoyed the company of the 'Ohio Gang' and could be informal with them, playing cards and drinking whiskey. He rewarded their loyalty with appointments to key posts such as the Director of the Mint and the Superintendent of Federal Prisons. Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty had a long-standing relationship with Harding and had served him as his political manager. It was not long before Daugherty betrayed Harding's trust and damaged the reputation of the Justice Department and its associated law-enforcement agencies. In 1923, a group of men including Jesse Smith, a member of the Ohio Gang and a close friend of Daugherty, were accused of using their influence within the Justice Department to sell pardons and immunity from prosecution; as details of the scandal emerged Smith attempted suicide. Daugherty was damaged by the scandal but escaped imprisonment. The head of the Veterans' Bureau, Charles R. Forbes, abused his position to a massive extent. Between 1921 and1923 at least $250 million was misappropriated, through fraudulent construction contracts and the selling off of government property at a fraction of its value

(e) The Teapot Dome scandal

The most damaging scandal of all revolved around the activities of Albert Fall, the Secretary of the Interior. A Senate enquiry was set up to scrutinize the leasing to private individuals of government oil areas which had been set aside for naval use. The enquiry discovered that Fall had managed to transfer oil reserves to his own department and then secretly leased those at Elk Hills, California and Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to two oil magnates, Edward L. Doheny and Harry F. Sinclair. In return, Fall had received substantial 'loans'. Fall was found guilty of accepting bribes, fined $100,000 and sentenced to twelve months in prison. Harding had been largely oblivious to the misdeeds of his friends. However, towards the end of his life it seems likely that he was becoming increasingly worried about their activities. When he set out on a trip to Alaska in July 1923, he had become profoundly depressed. In San Francisco on August 2, he suffered a coronary thrombosis which proved fatal. His unexpected death was followed by a flood of allegations about his private life and public appointments. The damage to the reputation of the Republican Party would have been more severe if it had not been for the patently high moral standards of his successor, Calvin Coolidge.

20.7 PROHIBITION

(a) The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)

Long before the federal anti-alcohol laws of 1919–20, the topic of Prohibition was a major issue, causing tension between Americans on both sides of the debate. The WCTU was perhaps the best organized of the groups lobbying for Prohibition. The name of this group reminds us of the fact that pressure for action against alcohol was very much a feminist issue at this time. The consumption of alcohol dated back to the colonial period and had become even more pronounced through the influx of European immigrants in the nineteenth century. The role of alcohol was clear across issues of domestic violence and abuse, child neglect, disposal of household income on liquor at the expense of food for the family and absence from work.

Catherine Gilbert Murdock observes:

> alcohol abuse in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries existed on a scale Americans today have trouble conceptualizing. Public drunkards were a pathetic, everyday spectacle in villages and cities throughout America. Drink really did kill men and ruin families, and millions of citizens felt that the best way to meet the crisis would be to eliminate alcoholic beverages. Moreover, the nation's abusive drinking patterns were strictly gendered. At the very most, 20 per cent of the alcoholic population was female. Historically, it is not America that had a drinking problem, it is American men. Male drinking gave rise to the American temperance movement, the longest, most popular social cause of the nineteenth century.
>
> (Murdock, 1998 p.3–4).

The WCTU was formed after a meeting in Cleveland in 1874 which was attended by church representatives from seventeen states. They elected Frances E. Willard as their first leader. Under her energetic leadership, the WCTU soon had chapters in every state and as early as 1875 the new body was petitioning congress for a Federal Prohibition Act. Their ambition was to replace the saloons which they so despised, with coffee houses. The WCTU undoubtedly gave the Prohibition issue a national profile and persuaded thousands of American women to embrace the argument for Prohibition.

(b) The Anti-Saloon League

A further cornerstone of the 'dry' movement came with the creation of a pressure group called the Anti-Saloon League in 1893. Its leadership and financial resources came to a considerable extent from the Protestant Church and in particular, Methodism. Its most important figure was Ohio-born Wayne Wheeler. He established close contact with powerful leaders in the Congress and even came to exert influence over the White House. Ohio came to exemplify Wheeler's vision of America itself, with its emphasis on rural values, hard work and strict observation of the Sabbath.

(c) Opponents of prohibition

The wave of immigration in the nineteenth century brought to America huge numbers of Germans, Irish and Italians whose culture included the consumption of beer, wine and whiskey. The brewing industry was a highly lucrative business and no group provided more sustained opposition to Prohibition than the United States Brewers' Association which convened for the first time in 1862. They launched a series of expensive newspaper campaigns and also lobbied against women's suffrage because they recognized that many of the most active Prohibitionists were women and they saw the WCTU as their mortal enemy.

(d) The impact of the First World War on prohibition

Approximately half of the forty-eight states were already 'dry' before America entered the First World War in April 1917. However, the war, the notion of sacrifice, hostility to all-things German (the brewing industry) and the over-riding need for preparedness changed the national mood and swayed the argument decisively in favour of the prohibitionists. Pressure for a federal ban on the manufacture and consumption of alcohol

assumed new momentum. Proponents of prohibition put forward practical, moral and religious arguments to support their stand against alcohol. First, they made the practical point that a ban on the production of alcohol would conserve supplies of important grains such as barley. Secondly, it was claimed that the efficiency of both industrial workers and the armed forces would be enhanced by a ban on liquor. Thirdly, they argued that it was wrong for America to continue to enjoy the consumption of alcohol while some of its young men were making the supreme sacrifice on the battlefields of France and Belgium. Proponents of prohibition assumed 'the loftiest motives of patriotism' for their cause, casting those who did not want a ban as inherently un-American.

(e) The Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act

'The noble experiment' of Prohibition was introduced by the Eighteenth Amendment which became effective on 16 January 1920. The new law prohibited 'the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States'. John F. Kramer, the first Prohibition Commissioner, proclaimed:

> This law will be obeyed in cities large and small, and in villages, and where it is not obeyed it will be enforced. The law says that liquor to be used as a beverage must not be manufactured. We shall see that it is not manufactured. Nor sold, nor given away, nor hauled in anything on the surface of the earth or under the earth or in the air.
>
> (McGirr, 2016 p.266)

(f) The enforcement of prohibition and reasons for its failure

Murdock notes:

> 'The stringency of national prohibition was not at first apparent. The Eighteenth Amendment approved by Congress and forty-six state legislatures (ten more than necessary for ratification) … did not prohibit purchase of liquor. This loophole, which had been created to obtain purchasers' testimonies against sellers, created an ethical morass … But the fact remained that drinkers did not get arrested and did not go to jail. In the 1920s a citizen could complain about the failure of government efforts and the breakdown of law and order while tapping comfortably into a new supply of bootleg hootch.' (Murdock, 1998 p.89)

The accompanying Volstead Act, passed by Congress in the autumn of 1918 and named after a member of the House from Minnesota, defined alcohol as any beverage containing more than 0.5 per cent alcohol. However, the act did allow possession and consumption of alcohol within the home, by the house-owner, his family and guests. In addition, the production of grain alcohol for medicinal, sacramental and industrial use remained legal.

Nevertheless, President Harding set up a Prohibition Unit under the leadership of Roy Haynes so that during the Prohibition era, millions of gallons of wine and spirits were destroyed, and thousands of illegal stills were confiscated. America's prisons filled up with those convicted for contravening the Prohibition laws: in 1932 alone, 44,678 people were given jail sentences for alcohol-related offences. Although these figures show some impact they should not hide the fact that the laws were hugely difficult to enforce and were flouted by many people throughout American society.

(g) Reasons for the failure of Prohibition

- Congress never allocated enough money to make enforcement of Prohibition possible. The ASL contended that Prohibition could be enforced for less than $5 million a year. Congress allocated slightly more than that and provided for around 1,500 prohibition agents in 1920. By 1930 the figure had only increased to 2,836.
- The sheer size of the United States and the immense boundaries between the United States and Canada in the north and Mexico in the south made the work of this small band of agents almost impossible. The United States had around 29,000 kilometres of coastline to patrol and substantial amounts of liquor were also smuggled in from the Bahamas and the West Indies.
- The modest salary received by the agents (on average, $2,000) was low enough to make them prone to bribery and corruption.
- Prohibition never received the full support of the American people. In particular, America's large, predominantly working-class, immigrant community tended to defy the Prohibition laws.
- The ban was also unpopular with the richest element of society, who saw the laws as an infringement of their personal liberty.

20.8 AL CAPONE AND ORGANIZED CRIME

During the 1920s violent and well-resourced gang leaders, most infamously Al Capone, fought out a brutal battle for territorial control of Chicago with its lucrative speakeasies. Ultimately it was Capone who emerged as the dominant racketeer, to the extent that by 1927 his annual income was estimated to be worth approximately $60 million. Born in 1899, the son of an Italian barber, his early introduction to violent crime took place on the streets of New York City. He moved to Chicago in 1919 and by 1920, his criminal partnerships were generating an income of over $2 million a year. Capone claimed that he was merely a businessman, legitimately meeting a public demand for alcohol but between 1927 and 1930 more than 500 gangland murders took place.

The most notorious of the gangland killings sanctioned by Capone was the 'St Valentine's Day Massacre' of February 1929. Capone's men donned police uniforms and entered a garage where several members of a rival gang were making coffee. While Capone's men slaughtered his rivals, Capone himself was seen in public, relaxing on Miami Beach in Florida. Later that year Capone was finally arrested by Philadelphia police for carrying a gun, but his operation continued from prison. In 1931, Capone was convicted on the grounds of income tax evasion rather than the murders which he had undoubtedly sanctioned but which remained unpunished. He was sentenced to eleven years in prison but was released in 1939, by which time he was seriously ill with syphilis. He died on his Palm Island estate in Florida in January 1947 at the age of forty-eight.

20.9 RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

For two weeks in the summer of 1925, the attention of the legal world focused on a modest courtroom in the small town of Dayton, Tennessee. What became known as the 'Monkey Trial' did not concern a murder or sensational crime, and lasted for only a fortnight. However, the issues it raised represented fundamental questions and in particular highlighted the tensions which existed between the traditional values of old, rural America and the new, modernist ideas created by advances in science and education. Many American

Protestants at this time were fundamentalists who staunchly defended what they held to be the literal truths contained in the Bible. Such beliefs were most widely held in the rural areas of the South and the Middle West. For many people in the South, and particularly within what was sometimes referred to as the 'Bible Belt', religious fundamentalism was inextricably linked with a deep-rooted belief in the supremacy of the white race. These fundamentalists took the view that the creation of the world in seven days was something to be taken literally and to be accepted without question. However, rapid progress in education and science had now placed the literal truth of the Bible in question. In American schools and colleges there was an increasing tendency to teach students about the *theory of evolution* and the ideas of scientists such as Charles Darwin. High school biology textbooks portrayed the gradual evolution of the human race as a process which had taken millions of years rather than seven days. Many scientists claimed that although their ideas were incompatible with a seven-day creation they by no means ruled out the existence of God.

At the centre of the campaign to defend the fundamentalist view was William Jennings Bryan. At the end of the First World War, Bryan launched an energetic campaign for the passage of laws prohibiting the teaching of evolution. In 1925 the state of Tennessee passed a law which banned the teaching in its public schools of any evolutionary theory which contradicted the view of the creation contained in the Book of Genesis. Shortly after the bill was passed, John T. Scopes, a young high school biology teacher in Dayton, was arrested for violating the new law. The American Civil Liberties Union claimed that academic freedom was at stake and offered Scopes the financial support needed to contest the case. The trial which followed highlighted the painful, transitional period between traditional values and the new ideas which America was experiencing at this time.

Bryan took centre stage for the prosecution. Scopes was represented by the country's outstanding defence lawyer, Clarence Darrow, an outspoken agnostic from Chicago. In a key session in the trial, Darrow placed emphasis on several passages in the Bible (such as the story of Jonah and the Whale) which he claimed were not be taken literally. In a devastating cross-examination Darrow exposed Bryan's ignorance and confusion about many parts of the Bible. However, although Darrow may have won the argument, he was unable to win the case. Scopes was found guilty and fined, although the sentence was later reversed on a technicality. The Tennessee law which had led to the case was upheld and was not repealed until 1967. Nevertheless Bryan's reputation was badly damaged and he died of a stroke on 26 July 1925 within days of the trial's conclusion and before he had left Dayton.

(a) Changing attitudes towards immigration

The 'Red Scare' saw an increasingly harsh stance against immigrants and particularly those who tried to enter the United States from Asia. This intolerant atmosphere was heightened by the economic impact of the recession of 1920–1. Those who vociferously claimed that native American stock was being undermined by the 'flood' of immigrants claimed that the literacy test of 1917 had failed to protect the United States from the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. The spectre of Lenin's communist regime which had come to power in the Soviet Union in 1917 only added to the clamour for new measures against immigrants. Those who campaigned for a return to 'national purity' argued that new anti-immigrant legislation was urgently needed to protect 'one hundred per cent Americans' against the influx of foreigners. It was not long before Congress gave way to the popular mood and passed the following measures.

20.10 THE COOLIDGE ERA AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1924

Harding's sudden death in August 1923 brought into the spotlight a politician who was unusually keen to maintain a low profile. John Calvin Coolidge was born on Independence Day 1872, in tiny hamlet in Vermont. Famously, on the night of Harding's death he was sworn in by the light of a kerosene lamp in his modest New England home. Harding's death removed Coolidge from the irritations of being a staggeringly inactive Vice President. However, his low profile meant that he had some work to do to avoid being more than a temporary stand-in for Harding. Coolidge used the ensuing months to set before Congress a limited programme that suggested a clear sense of continuity with Harding. On virtually all domestic issues he took a conservative stance. As the fall-out from Harding's scandals and indiscretions emerged he out-manoeuvred his Republican opponents for the candidacy and let his obvious integrity stand for him. Above all, Coolidge's emphatically pro-business stance, at a time of general economic well-being was enough to convince the Republican Party that Coolidge could secure a victory in 1924. The result was emphatic. Coolidge secured 15.7 million popular votes, with Davis far behind, with 8.3 million votes. Significantly, LaFollette's 4.9 million votes increased the damage visited upon the Democrats who were destined to sit-out the entire decade of presidential leadership.

(a) Historiography and analysis of the Coolidge administration

Historians have generally been dismissive of the Coolidge Presidency. However, a new insight was provided in 1998, when American historian Robert H. Ferrell published *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge*. He sees Coolidge as idealistic and guided by a powerful sense of public service. In the first full-length account for thirty years, Ferrell demonstrated that the president dubbed by the press at the time to be the 'odd little man from Vermont' (Ferrell, 1998 prologue) was actually hard-working and politically astute. In the speech to the newspaper editors which received so much attention for the statement on business, Coolidge also advocated: 'the multiplication of schools, the increase of knowledge, the dissemination of intelligence, the encouragement of science, the broadening of outlook, the expansion of liberties, the widening of culture' (Ferrell, 1998, p.61).

20.11 THE ECONOMY IN THE 1920S

In broad terms the 1920s in America was a period of unprecedented prosperity. Big business made enormous profits, investment in new technology was huge, unemployment was low and the general standard of living rose significantly. The stimulation of the First World War and the rapid economic mobilization which industrial warfare had demanded provided a platform for further growth. From 1923 the economy took off into a period of rapid expansion. The innovation of the assembly line and the adoption of scientific management techniques led to stunning increases in productivity. The 1920s saw a general increase in the *per capita* output of industrial workers of around 40 per cent. Widespread consumer credit and low levels of taxation combined to create an economy stimulated by new levels of consumerism. These factors coalesced to create the first great economic boom in the history of the United States. High demand, rising wages, easy credit and a cultural willingness to borrow fuelled what would become popularly known as the 'Roaring Twenties'.

No industry played a greater part in the boom period than the automobile industry. The technological innovation and successful production and marketing techniques of companies such as Ford, Chrysler and General Motors not only enabled many Americans to

purchase their first motor car but also led to the rapid development of connected industries such as oil, rubber and glass while also prompting unprecedented levels of road building. The short-term political consequences of the boom were plain to see. A succession of Republican Presidents – Harding, Coolidge and Hoover – was able, at least until the crash of October 1929, to take credit for leading the 'party of prosperity'. The buoyant nature of the economy in the 1920s and the unprecedented availability of consumer goods have tended to create the impression that this was a decade of prosperity for all. However, it is also clear that certain industries, groups and regions did not share in the general economic well-being.

(a) Farmers and agriculture

Most American farmers did not share in the general prosperity of the 1920s. Indeed for many the decade was marked by poverty, hardship and an endless struggle against debt; *per capita* farm income was one-third of the national average. While city dwellers appeared to be enjoying the fruits of prosperity their agrarian counterparts often endured financial distress. Over-production was at the centre of many farmers' difficulties. During the First World War, the federal government had encouraged farmers to produce as much cotton and wheat as possible and to raise the maximum number of livestock. This emphasis on production was maintained even when the war came to an end in November 1918. Better-quality seeds and new machinery meant that the 1920s witnessed a steady increase in farm output. Eventually the farmers were so successful that they created a glut of many of the products they worked so hard to produce. This resulted in farm produce being sold at prices well below the actual cost of production, and formed the context for a continuing drift from the countryside to the towns and cities.

1 The McNary-Haugen Bill

In January 1924, two Republicans, Senator Charles L. McNary of Oregon and Congressman Gilbert N. Haugen, of Iowa, introduced their Farm Relief Bill, which proposed that the federal government would control farm surpluses and increase prices by purchasing annual surplus stocks at agreed prices and then sell them abroad at world prices. The bill sought to relate farm prices to the period of prosperity between 1910 and 1914, when farm prices had been buoyant. This bill was opposed by Coolidge and defeated in 1924. It seems unlikely that any amount of favourable legislation could have protected the farming community from the financial storm that began in October 1929. The problem of over-production was exacerbated by the sudden fall in demand after 1929. Many farmers could not appreciate a connection between their own struggle to make ends meet and the wheeling and dealing of the stock market. At first, it was difficult for many farmers to see the Wall Street Crash as anything other than a remote event. However, the urban demand for farm products rested on the ability of the urban workers to purchase food. This was profoundly damaged by the events of October 1929. Although many city dwellers were desperate for food, they could no longer afford to pay good prices. The alternative for American farmers was to sell their goods abroad. However, the worldwide Depression meant that the foreign market had simply disappeared. Therefore, conditions in the countryside were actually made worse as a result of the economic crash. Furthermore, many subsistence farmers in parts of the Appalachians and in the cut-over regions of the Great Lakes lived in remote areas, without modern amenities and with poor soil conditions. 0f the 8.5 million tenant and sharecropper families living in the South, 3 million were African Americans depending on their landlords for housing, farm equipment and credit. In return,

they would provide a year's labour. Each year the landlord would divide the proceeds and the sharecroppers would slip further into debt.

2 New technology

Whereas the industrial growth of the late nineteenth century had been founded on coal, iron and steel, the economy of the 1920s rested on new industries. These included chemicals, electricity and synthetic textiles. The development of the electrical industry in turn led to the electrification of domestic dwellings, and the equipment of these homes with new appliances such as cookers, refrigerators and a range of household gadgets. New technology led to the introduction of the radio (the first broadcasting station, KDKA, began broadcasting in 1920) and the development of the aviation industry. Although the Wright brothers made the first flight in 1903, it was Charles Lindbergh's spectacular flight across the Atlantic in *The Spirit of St. Louis* in 1927 which really captured the public's imagination. Within three years, 50,000 miles of air routes had been established in the United States and almost half a million passengers were being carried per year.

(b) Henry Ford and the automobile industry

The publication of the first automobile journal, *Horseless Age*, in 1895, heralded the dawn of a new era in the history of American transport. The late nineteenth century had been dominated by the development of a coast-to-coast railway system. The new century would belong to the car. At the turn of the century the major French and German car manufacturers prided themselves on the sheer quality of the cars they produced. Each car was individually built, but this meant that prices were extremely high. In 1899, 2,000 cars were built in the United States. Nothing contributed more to the economic boom of the 1920s than the automobile industry, and its fortunes are inextricably linked to the remarkable story of a farm boy from Michigan, Henry Ford. Although he was not the first American to produce a motor car, his intuitive grasp of the potential mass market made him unique. His constant drive to improve production techniques had a galvanizing effect on his competitors and transformed American industry itself. Although Ford was infinitely more comfortable in the tranquillity of rural America than in the city, he probably did more than any other individual to transform America into a modern, urban economy. Ford performed modestly at school but qualified as an engineer in 1891 in a Detroit company owned by Thomas Edison. Five years later he produced his first automobile, which had a four-horse-power engine. In 1899, he produced an improved version and in the same year set up the firm, which became known in 1903 as the Ford Motor Company. He displayed a clarity of purpose that was to make him one of the most influential figures of the century. In 1905 he split from his financial backers at Ford who wanted to specialize in luxury cars. Ford gained absolute control and made the decision to make all of the component parts in his own factory; this would be critical in enabling him to make his cars as cheaply as possible. He set up a small team who worked intensely for a year to produce a new car. They devised the Model T that came on the market in the autumn of 1908. Sales were remarkable and in order to meet the demand, and inspired by the popularization of Frederick Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), Ford perfected his assembly-line techniques. Eventually, Ford's River Rouge plant in Detroit, Michigan, became the largest factory complex in the world.

Other manufacturers such as Chrysler and General Motors produced a more attractive range of cars but Ford had done more than anyone else to create the fact that by 1920, 9 million cars had been registered and by 1929, nearly 27 million. The knock-on effect of

this was economically and socially profound. As well as employing almost half a million workers the automobile industry also stimulated the growth of plate glass, rubber, paint, lead, leather and other essential materials. The building of the nation's roads, the movement to the cities, the growth of the suburbs and the development of skyscrapers can all be linked to the fundamental change which Ford had brought to American society.

(c) Analysis: How widespread was the affluence of the 1920s?

In broad terms, America's industrial workers performed well in the 1920s. Industrial production almost doubled, and the majority were rewarded for their efforts with a general increase in prosperity. Hours of work declined, real wages increased by 26 per cent and unemployment, which in 1920 had stood at 5.2 per cent, had dwindled to a mere 4.2 per cent by 1928. Many workers saw a gradual improvement in their working conditions, with a new emphasis on safety, recreational facilities and the development of 'company unions' which promoted meetings between workers' representatives and management. Despite these broad improvements, employers were generally antagonistic towards trade unions. This contributed to a general decline in trade union membership from around 5 million in 1920 to 3.5 million in 1929.

1 The roaring twenties

The prodigiously gifted writer F Scott Fitzgerald helped to create a notion of the 1920s as 'the Jazz Age' or the 'Roaring Twenties', an endless cycle of parties, fabulous houses, flappers and high fashion. But the privileged experience of upper class Americans in a novel in no sense indicates that the general affluence of the 1920s was evenly distributed. While for better-off Americans the month of October 1929 marked a painful dividing line between prosperity and poverty, for others there was no such distinction. For many people the 1920s as a whole was characterized by poverty, low wages, menial work or irregular employment.

When he came to the White House in 1933 Roosevelt was acutely aware that many Americans had endured severe economic hardship for generations. In the summer of 1933 the President asked the first lady, Eleanor, to visit the Appalachians to investigate the stories of fearsome poverty which he had heard reported. What she saw shocked her. At Scott's Run, near Morgantown, West Virginia, she came across children who did not know what it was like to sit down at a table and eat a proper meal. The groups which remained outside the general prosperity included working-class women, African Americans, the rural poor and perhaps the poorest of all, Native Americans. Finally, it should be noted that certain regions, including the textile towns of New England, the rural South and the Appalachian region of West Virginia and Kentucky, had very significant issues of poverty.

(d) Republican economic policy

Robert H. Ferrell offers this perspective on the American economy in the 1920s:

> The 1920s saw the triumph of American industry, for its accomplishments stood at every hand. Its organisation reached across the continent, its efficiency was known worldwide, its production was nothing short of astonishing. Its relation to American government was so intimate that it could be described as dominating government. And in regard to American labor, its relation to laboring men and women, it was similarly dominant: nominally equal, managing a Hooverian cooperation between

its purposes and those of the workforce that achieved them, industry controlled its labour force more closely, tightly, than in any previous era in American history.

(Ferrell, 1998 p.72)

(e) Coolidge's decision not to seek a second term and the emergence of Hoover

The prevailing 'Coolidge Prosperity' meant that the incumbent would have secured widespread support if he had chosen to stand again. However, Coolidge stunned the political world with a terse statement of August 1927 'I do not choose to run for president in nineteen twenty-eight' (Ferrell, 1998 p.192). His decision paved the way for a major figure to occupy centre stage. Herbert Hoover was orphaned at an early age and raised as a Quaker in simple circumstances on the frontier by his aunt and uncle. He made his way up the political ladder through remarkable dedication to public service. He worked tirelessly under Harding and then Coolidge to bring efficiency, to the business community. Denied the nomination in 1920, the political landscape had shifted sufficiently to allow Hoover an untroubled run in 1928. In August 1928, Hoover formally accepted the Republican Presidential nomination. To an audience of 60,000 people Hoover confidently declared:

'We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land. The poorhouse is vanishing from among us … We shall soon with the help of God be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from the nation' (Badger, 1989 p.29).

Even though Hoover was sorely limited as a speaker, Republican prosperity and his personal credibility ensured that the Democratic candidate Al Smith was soundly beaten. Although Hoover had won a resounding victory, Smith had secured 15 million votes compared to Davis' 8 million votes in 1924. In addition, Smith had actually out-performed Hoover in the country's twelve biggest cities. This boded well for the Democrats in terms of their political future.

20.12 HOOVER'S DOMESTIC AGENDA

Once installed in the White House, Hoover's attention to detail seemed all-encompassing. He set a much broader agenda than his immediate predecessors. Amid this enterprise and rugged individualism, no one was able to foresee the incredible collapse that was just around the corner. In the words of his biographer Glen Jeansonne, 'Hoover before the Depression was Noah before deluge' (Jeansonne, 2012 p.112). In his inaugural address of March 1929, the president stated: 'In no nation are the fruits of accomplishment more secure' (hoover.archives.gov). As one journalist reported:

> We were in a mood for magic … The whole country was a vast, expectant gallery, its eyes focused on Washington. We had summoned a great engineer to solve our problems for us; we now sat back comfortably and confidently to watch the problems being solved. The modern technical mind was for the first time at the head of a government … Almost with the air of giving genius its chance, we waited for the performance to begin.
>
> (Kennedy, 1999 p.43)

But the president was about to endure a test that would have pushed any leader to the limits of their skill and endurance.

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Chapter

21 Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1929–45

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The sheer scale of President Roosevelt's achievements means that the momentous events covered in this chapter are synonymous with his personal career. When he took over the presidency from a beleaguered Herbert Hoover in March 1933, the entire capitalist system on which American success rested was on the brink of complete collapse. Personally wealthy, and politically untested, FDR grew into his role in a remarkable way. Though the unprecedented domestic programme of economic and social recovery which he masterminded was unable to restore prosperity or full employment, it did, at least, preserve democracy. While the United States poured millions of dollars into the 'New Deal', in the broader global context, as part of an age of imperialism, regimes far removed from the democratic tradition launched their own programmes to secure dominance, ensure food supplies and impose themselves on 'weaker' neighbours. Buffeted by the Great Depression, Italy, Germany and Japan followed a path of large-scale investment fuelling not just domestic recovery, but also massive rearmament. By the time Roosevelt commenced his second term in 1937 the president and his democratic allies in Europe were increasingly preoccupied with the challenge of avoiding war. The belligerence of the dictatorships in Europe and the Far East heightened the concerns of isolationists in the United States who wanted, at all costs, to avoid any military commitment similar to the one of 1917–18. Ever mindful of his political success Roosevelt assured his domestic audience that the United States would not be sending its young men into another war. With this emphatic promise, he duly won a further presidential victory in 1940. But by now the international storm clouds created by Japan's aggression against China and the war that began in Europe, in September 1939, were increasingly difficult to avoid.

21.1 THE STOCK MARKET CRASH OF 1929

> The collapse of the world economy from 1929 to 1933 – now justly called the Great Depression – was the seminal economic event of the twentieth century. No country escaped its clutches; for more than ten years the malaise that it brought in its wake hung over the world, poisoning every aspect of social and material life and crippling the future of a whole generation.
>
> (L. Ahamed, 2009 p.6)

They did not see it coming. The most powerful financiers in America entered the autumn anticipating the same returns they had banked on year after year in the roaring decade of the 1920s. Then, from mid-October 1929, the prices of shares on the Wall Street stock market began to fall steadily. As jittery days turned into a recognizable trend, the men at the very top of the US banking system gathered for an emergency meeting at the

headquarters of J. P. Morgan. It was too late. While long-term economic trends and global factors were undoubtedly important, it was also the case that the sheer greed and arrogance of the barons of the US financial system brought dire consequences. The first major panic came on October 24th. The next day, Hoover tried to reassure the financial community, stating that the American economy remained sound and prosperous. Those who earned their living judging the mood in the financial district were less convinced. Four days later another calamitous day on the stock market saw some 16.5 million shares change hands. The sudden and precipitous collapse of the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929 has come to symbolize the start of the Great Depression. Starting in the United States, the developed economy was plunged into a downward spiral from which it would not fully recover until the outbreak of the Second World War. The most catastrophic of all financial avalanches moved with increasing ferocity as it swept more and more economies into the abyss. There is a consensus among economic historians that by 1929 stock market speculation had reached unhealthy and unrealistic levels. Successive years of prosperity had been accompanied by a rapid increase in the prices of shares and in the numbers of people willing to buy them. Between 1927 and October 1929 many share prices had soared; by early 1929 at least 1 million people were speculating on the stock market. The boom in share prices could not go on forever, and the bubble burst in October 1929.

(a) Why did the crash happen when it did?

The financial boom could be sustained only by fresh injections of cash. This could come from two main sources, either new investors attracted by the prospect of quick profits on the stock market, or further investment from existing investors. As the boom had gathered pace no one appeared to have any inkling that it could not carry on indefinitely. The fact that many investors were allowed to buy shares with borrowed money – 'on the margin' – increased the numbers of speculators but did nothing to promote future financial stability. When the level of demand finally began to slow in 1929 there was a sudden appreciation that many investors had purchased stocks and shares at inflated prices. The moment that a general tendency to buy was replaced by a general desire to sell, the market was in serious trouble. It was then that the psychological mood of the financial hub became all important.

(b) Analysis: What were the underlying factors behind the Great Crash?

The American economy had long-standing difficulties which went beyond the activities of the stock market. A consensus among economic historians regarding the causes of the Crash remains difficult to find. Four central structural weaknesses in the American economy have been acknowledged, but historians differ in the emphasis placed upon them.

(c) Underlying factors for the Great Crash

- **The very success of industrial production in the mid-1920s could not be sustained indefinitely.** During the 1920s industrial capacity in many key areas of the economy steadily increased. The decade saw massive increases in industrial output generally, and in particular, consumer goods, the automobile industry and construction. While it was well understood that capitalist economies are cyclical in nature, the industrialists seemed blissfully unaware that production would eventually end with a fall-off in demand.

- **The inherent inequality in wealth and the maldistribution of income meant that there was not enough purchasing power in the economy to sustain this growth indefinitely.** In 1929, one-third of the nation's income was in the hands of only 5 per cent of the population, while just over 70 per cent of the population received an income below $2,500 a year. Ultimately, there would come a point when too many consumer items, from houses, to automobiles to domestic products were being piled up and at the other end of the process, consumers did not have enough money to simply keep on buying.
- **It would soon become clear that there were also inherent weaknesses in the banking system.** At the start of the 1920s there were over 30,000 independent banks in existence in the United States. Far too many of these were small, rural banks with limited capital. A lack of resources, poor management and willingness to make purely speculative loans rendered them highly vulnerable to sudden, large-scale withdrawals or 'runs'. The fragility of these banks is indicated by the fact that almost 5,000 of them collapsed between 1923 and 1930. Pressure on the rural banks became even more acute with the onset of the agricultural Depression in 1930. The banking crisis then spread from rural to metropolitan areas and by autumn 1932 from individual banks to the collapse of banking systems across entire states. By March 1933, thirty-four states had closed their banks.
- **There were inherent weaknesses in the international economy and their inter-connectedness with the American system.** In 1919 America was the world's major creditor nation; massive war loans had been paid to the European powers. However, the capacity of the European nations to sell their goods in America and help repay their loans was made difficult by the introduction of prohibitive tariffs, such as the Smoot–Hawley tariff (1930). Conversely, American investment overseas steadily increased. In particular, major investment in German economic recovery and unsound loans to Latin America were problematic. The closure of the Austrian Kredit-Anstalt bank in 1931 signalled the general collapse of the European economy. The knock-on effect of this was keenly felt in the United States.

21.2 THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The Great Depression that began in the autumn of 1929 was without parallel in American history. Its severity blighted an entire decade. The prosperity which preceded it meant that the psychological consequences of more than ten years of misery and mass unemployment were truly profound. By autumn 1931 unemployment had reached 8 million and was rising fast. The downward spiral reached its worst point in the winter of 1932–3. By 1932 at least 13 million people were unemployed. A further 1 to 2 million, other Americans were wandering the country desperately searching for work. By early 1933, approximately one-quarter of the entire work force was unemployed. Around 40 million Americans did not have a dependable source of income within their family.

(a) The impact of the Depression

Between 1929 and 1932 American industrial production was cut by more than half. The average weekly wage in manufacturing dropped from $24.16 in 1929 to $16.65 in 1933. Real earnings dropped by one-third between 1929 and 1933. Iron and steel production fell by 59 per cent in the same period. The automobile industry now experienced its own Depression. At the start of 1929, Henry Ford employed 120,000 workers at his Detroit factory. By August 1931, only 37,000 men were needed. One observer noted that Detroit was 'clogged with dead tissue … and its life is bleeding away' (Badger, 1989 p.21). In November 1929 Hoover met with railroad presidents and urged them not to abandon planned track construction. Industrialists were asked to continue with their investment programmes. The beleaguered President urged mayors and governors across the nation to increase their spending on public works. Hoover was cerebral and hard-working, but reluctant to engage with the public. But as the depression took hold the stark sign 'No men wanted' appeared outside factories and businesses across the country. In the autumn of 1930 a despairing mechanic in Houston, Texas, sat down and wrote a brief suicide note:

> This depression has got me licked. There is no work to be had. I can't accept charity and I am too proud to appeal to my kin or friends, and I am too honest to steal. So I can see no other course. A land flowing with milk and honey and a first-class mechanic can't make an honest living. I would rather take my chances with a just God than with unjust humanity.
>
> (Badger, 1989 p.11)

In January 1930 the Charity Organisation Society of New York reported that it was being 'swamped with appeals for help and in Boston desperate people were offered groceries in return for chopping wood' (Rappleye, 2016, p.166). As winter conditions made suffering more intense, 'A Red Cross survey in Lee County, bordering the Mississippi River, found 'not only suffering but actual starvation' (Rappleye, 2016, p.210). William Leuchtenburg provides a vivid picture of a nation in Depression:

> 'By 1932 the unemployed numbered upward of thirteen million. Many lived in the primitive conditions of a … society stricken by famine. In the coal fields of West Virginia and Kentucky, evicted families shivered in tents in midwinter; children went barefoot. In Los Angeles, people whose gas and electricity had been turned off were reduced to cooking over wood fires in back lots. Visiting nurses in New York found children famished. On the outskirts of town or in empty lots in the big cities, homeless men threw together makeshift shacks of boxes and scrap metal. St. Louis had the largest "Hooverville", a settlement of more than a thousand souls, but there was scarcely a city that did not harbour at least one … I come home every night filled with gloom", one Washington correspondent noted, "I see on streets filthy, ragged, desperate looking men, such as I have never seen before". In December 1932, a New York couple moved into a cave in Central Park where they lived for the next year.'
>
> (Leuchtenburg, 1963 p.1, 2, 19)

(b) Analysis of Hoover's response to the Depression

As the Depression tightened its grip in the winter of 1930, Hoover claimed that the economic trauma was a worldwide rather than American phenomenon. But his words seemed rather hollow when, just over a week later, the Bank of the US, a private institution with over fifty branches, collapsed. Since October 1929 around 1,300 banks had failed.

Having claimed the credit for the boom, Hoover now attracted the bitterness of a nation. He was portrayed as callous and eventually he became so unpopular that it was unsafe for him to go out onto the streets to campaign. The strain was becoming increasingly intense and in private an aide noted: 'The president is dog tired. How he stands up under the pressure is a mystery to me' (Rappleye, 2016 p.266). By the end of 1931 Hoover confided to his closest aides that he was now concerned not just with saving Germany or Britain, but with saving the United States itself. He now made his most significant move of the Depression. In December 1931, he asked Congress to set up an Emergency Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) which would authorize massive loans to insurance companies, railroad companies and banks to promote fresh investment in the hope that this would fuel industrial recovery. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was headed by Charles Dawes and was granted capital of $500 million with the authority to borrow an additional $1.5 billion. It was established in January 1932, and within the first six months of its existence it had provided loans of $1.2 billion.

Robert S. McElvaine has observed:

> Hoover was not the heartless ogre that a generation and more of Democrats have depicted. He was, rather, that rarest of politicians, a man of principle … He believed firmly in individualism, but not the sort connoted by his frequently quoted term 'rugged individualism' … Hoover not only wanted everyone to have a chance to succeed, but he also opposed heavily concentrated wealth and believed that the unfortunate should be cared for by their own communities. Another term Hoover used, 'progressive individualism', was a more accurate description of his philosophy … he wanted communities of 'socially responsible individualists' to provide for the unemployed.
>
> (McElvaine, 1983 p.20)

However, even sympathetic accounts point out that Hoover's response of 'voluntary charity, local and state relief' were wholly inadequate in the face of a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. Charles R. Morris notes that; 'the market crash occurred in the seventh month of the term of the new president, Herbert Hoover. The subsequent economic collapse overwhelmed him, forever destroying his reputation. That is a pity, because in calmer times, he might have created a positive legacy of progressive policy-making' (Morris, 2017 p.123). Swept from office in the most brutal circumstances, Hoover carried with him forever the conviction that the first fault lines of the Depression were beyond the influence of the White House.

21.3 THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1932

When the Democratic Party came together for its Convention of June 1932, party bosses were confident that the candidate they selected, as Democratic nominee would go on to win the Presidency. As one popular convention button stated 'Anybody but Hoover'. The front runner was Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had been elected Governor of New York in 1928 and re-elected by a record margin of 700,000 votes in 1930. This reflected his growing reputation as an energetic, but politically moderate, reformer. He was not yet regarded as a political heavyweight. He was careful not to make strong ideological commitments that would tie him down later. In a commencement address at Oglethorpe University in May 1932 he told his young audience: 'The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something' (Morris, 2017 p.257). While he explicitly advocated a shift away from 'an individualistic

society' towards greater 'social planning', these outline ideas were not enough for some observers. The *New York Times* bemoaned his capacity for shifting ground claiming that: 'the man most to be avoided in a time of crisis is the one who goes about wringing his hands and demanding that something be done without explaining or knowing what can or ought to be done' (Dallek, 2017 p.115). He was being defined as an opportunist, big on personal charm but shallow of intellect.

Conversely, Roosevelt had sustained an interest in issues which served to extend his appeal beyond the urban East. His knowledge of farm issues and enthusiasm for conservation made western Democrats receptive to him. In addition, his long periods of convalescence at Warm Springs, Georgia, enabled him to develop an affinity with the South, which was not shared by his rival, the archetypal New Yorker, Al Smith. Roosevelt now appeared to be a candidate who could appeal to both urban and rural elements within the Democratic Party. The Roosevelt banner attracted blue-collar workers, trade unionists and earnest young activists. Despite this broad support, the nomination for President was no formality. He needed a two-thirds majority to secure the party's nomination. Denied a first-ballot victory, he appeared vulnerable until Garner dropped out and decisively the State of California gave its backing to him. Roosevelt had come close to losing the nomination, but on the fourth ballot he received 945 votes.

(a) Roosevelt's New Deal campaign pledge

When Roosevelt gave his acceptance speech in Chicago in July, 1932, he told the packed convention: 'On the farms, in the large metropolitan areas, in the smaller cities and in the villages, millions of our citizens cherish the hope that their old standards of living and thought have not gone forever. Those millions cannot and shall not hope in vain.' Then came the final rhetorical flourish: 'I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a New Deal for the American People.' He made no attempt to elaborate on the concept of the 'New Deal' and had not anticipated its importance for his future administration. The phrase itself was dreamt up by speechwriter Sam Rosenman, and it remained an ill-defined notion throughout what was generally a flawless campaign. Biographer Robert Dallek says that 'The truth is that Roosevelt had no more idea of how he would restore the country's prosperity than Abraham Lincoln had in trying to persuade the rebellious Southern states to remain in the Union' (Dallek, 2017 p.2).

Meanwhile, Hoover's shaky prospects looked even slimmer when a veteran's protest march on Washington in July 1932 was met with a violently disproportionate response. The 20,000 strong Bonus Army made camp on Pennsylvania Avenue but their brutal removal by bayonet wielding cavalry men, and incredibly, six tanks, prompted widespread outrage. Buoyed by Hoover's mounting unpopularity, Roosevelt concentrated on attacking Hoover's record, criticizing the incumbent for overspending in what was an increasingly bitter contest. In September 1932, Roosevelt declared: 'I accuse the present Administration of being the greatest spending Administration in peace times in all our history.' Hoover responded bitterly, seeing his opponent as an inconsistent opportunist: 'this campaign is more than a contest between two men … They are proposing changes and so-called new deals which would destroy the very foundations of our American system' (Dallek, 2017 p.127).

The Republicans were universally blamed for the Crash. In the words of Leuchtenburg: 'On the outskirts of town or in empty lots in the big cities, homeless men threw together makeshift shacks of boxes and scrap metal. St Louis had the largest "Hooverville", a settlement of more than a thousand souls, but there was scarcely a city that did not harbor at least one' (Leuchtenburg, 1963 p.2). The same author describes how the campaign took its toll on the incumbent. 'Toward the end, Hoover was a pathetic figure, a weary, beaten man, often jeered by crowds as a President had never been jeered before' (Leuchtenburg,

1963 p.16). When Election Day dawned on 8 November 1932 it was clear that the Hoover–Curtis ticket was heading for an emphatic defeat. The Roosevelt–Garner team carried all but six states and 57.4 per cent of the popular vote compared to Hoover's 39.7 per cent. Roosevelt gained 22.8 million votes compared to Hoover's 15.7 million.

(b) The impact of polio on FDR

The ups and downs of political life were placed into sharp perspective in August 1921, while Roosevelt was enjoying a vacation at the family's summer home in New Brunswick, Canada. Roosevelt returned home from several days spent sailing, and swimming, feeling completely exhausted. By morning, his temperature was 102 degrees and by the afternoon the paralysis, from which he would never recover, had already set in. He had been struck down by poliomyelitis. Aged thirty-nine, he had always enjoyed bracing good health but was now permanently crippled, able to walk only with the aid of leg braces. He returned to the political arena with a narrow victory in the contest for the Governorship of New York in 1928 where he prevailed by just over 25,000 votes from a total of 4.23 million. To win such a prestigious position, against terrible physical adversity, in a year that had seen the Republican candidate take the presidency in a landslide, made him a genuine contender for the presidential nomination for 1932. Roosevelt used the Governorship to demonstrate that he could effectively deal with his disability and at the same time carry out a progressive agenda. A resounding victory in the Governorship election of 1930 cemented Roosevelt's place on the national political stage. In the summer of 1932, he was nominated as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. Four victories in Presidential elections then followed (1932, 1936, 1940 and 1944). In office, Roosevelt faced the most severe Depression in American history and then led the Grand Alliance in the struggle against fascism. The responsibilities he faced could not have been more daunting or unrelenting.

21.4 THE HUNDRED DAYS AND THE FIRST NEW DEAL

(a) The inaugural address

A sullen Hoover had 'left office to the sound of crashing banks' and as one writer observed: 'we could smell the Depression in the air, it was like a raw wind' (Leuchtenburg, 1963 p.18). Roosevelt was careful to keep a distance from the damaged outgoing president during the long interregnum. The economic situation deteriorated even further between Roosevelt's victory in the November 1932 election and his inauguration in March 1933. Jonathan Alter goes as far as to say that: 'It is hard to avoid the conclusion that he intentionally allowed the economy to sink lower so that he could enter the presidency in a more dramatic fashion' (Alter, 2007 p.181).

Once he had assumed the presidency, Roosevelt needed to combat the popular mood of despair and to address the issue of unemployment, given that a third of the work force was without a job. Anthony Badger comments that Roosevelt 'Undoubtedly lifted the paralysing fear that had settled on the country … He was the first American President who could carry his message directly to the people' (Badger, 1989 p.7). On inauguration day, Saturday 4 March 1933, the president told a huge crowd: 'First of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror.' The brief inaugural address was remarkably effective in raising the national mood. Roosevelt was scathing about the country's bankers who, having 'failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure and have abdicated'. The new President concluded that 'our greatest primary task is to

put people to work' and promised 'action, and action now' (Dallek, 2017 p.5). The White House received around 450,000 letters, nearly all of them favourable, in the first week after the speech. Roosevelt had convinced many of the American people that he had the compassion to listen to them directly. His instincts for the popular mood were again demonstrated when the Volstead Act was quickly amended so that drinking beer became legal, even though the formal undoing of prohibition would take longer. But the road to recovery would be immensely challenging and it would need more than fine speeches and warm words, however welcome and well received they might be. Dallek states, 'Franklin Roosevelt's greatest challenge on assuming office was finding ways to combat the Great Depression with effective federal programs that would not agitate public fears of a swing toward collectivism and away from individualism by a president reaching for too much power' (Dallek, 2017 p.8).

(b) The collapse of the banking system

Given the parlous state of the banks, Roosevelt's capacity to remain calm in the eye of the financial storm was increasingly striking. Even on the very day of inauguration, the banking crisis lurched downward. At 2.30 am on 4 March the banks of New York shut down. The financial system of the entire United States was on the edge of the abyss. Thirty-eight states had now closed their banks. Roosevelt recognized the psychological element of this crisis and declared a nationwide bank holiday which gave some people the opportunity to regain their nerve. Crucially, the administration stopped some way short of a truly radical step such as nationalizing the banks but rather confined itself to a series of reforms simply designed to bring stability to the system. The administration now rushed through the Emergency Banking Relief Bill, the first of what would be an avalanche of new legislation. This act, passed by Congress in under eight hours, brought all banks under federal control and allowed those banks considered solvent to reopen under licence. For the time being, it was enough.

(c) The fireside chats

On the evening of 12 March 1933, a CBS newsman announced, 'The President wants to come into your home and sit at your fireside for a little chat. For the first of his "fireside chats" around 60 million Americans gathered round their radio sets and were told in a calm, positive tone that it was now safe for them to return their savings to the banks. "I can assure you that it is safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress"' (Dallek, 2017 p.140–1). Roosevelt's ability to communicate with the American people had been amply demonstrated and as William Leuchtenburg comments:

> Roosevelt was the first President to master the technique of reaching people directly over the radio. In his fireside chats, he talked like a father discussing public affairs with his family in the living room. As he spoke, he seemed unconscious of the fact that he was addressing millions. [Roosevelt] undoubtedly lifted the paralysing fear that had settled on the country … He was … the first American President who could carry his message directly to the people.
>
> (Leuchtenburg, 1963 p.330)

Finally, it is interesting to note that while the Fireside Chats have become such an important part of the Roosevelt mythology he actually spoke in this way only four times in 1933 and only twenty-seven times in total during a four-term presidency.

(d) Analysis: To what extent was FDR personally responsible for the New Deal?

Jonathan Alter offers this insight: 'When FDR became President, he had no carefully worked out political philosophy or rigorous approach to governing beyond a penchant for action. This sounds like a shortcoming but proved a hidden asset. Had he been an intellectual or ideologue, he would have lacked the flexibility and spirit of experimentation the times required' (Alter, 2007 p.32). Although to the American people the first New Deal and the personality of Roosevelt were inextricably linked, historians now emphasize the collective aspects of the New Deal. Roosevelt was the driving force, the 'remote majesty' in the White House, but he used a myriad of advisers and aides and literally thousands of administrators. Most important in terms of advice was 'The Brain Trust', consisting of a small group of university academics and lawyers. The sheer scope of the New Deal was staggering and transformed the role of the federal government so that the impact of the national government was felt in virtually every household. The power of the presidency was visibly extended but it would be wrong to suggest that every initiative stemmed from the Oval Office. David Kennedy points out that even as the Hundred Days drew to a close:

> The precise battle plan of the New Deal's attack … remained difficult to define. Little coherent pattern could be detected in the unlikely mixture of policies that had been adopted. They ranged from orthodox budget cutting to expansive spending for relief and public works … from deliberate crop destruction to thoughtful conservation, from mortgage protection for the middle class to union protection for labor.
>
> (Kennedy, 1999 p.153)

Fiona Venn, in *The New Deal*, states:

> Recent historical interpretations of the New Deal have tended to emphasize its limitations as a reforming, radical force. Many of its achievements helped to institutionalize and consolidate the existing *status quo* in both economic and political spheres. Certainly, it also reinforced the prevailing gender stereotypes, incorporated organized labor into a regulated contractual relationship with capital and failed to address critical issues such as the racial discrimination endemic in American society. Many of its longest-lasting effects were virtually coincidental, most notably the changes in the role of the federal government, the strengthening of the executive branch and the beginning of an 'imperial presidency'.
>
> (Venn, 1998 p.3)

21.5 THE SCALE OF THE NEW DEAL

In the first 100 days of his presidency Roosevelt introduced no less than fifteen major bills into law. In his biography of FDR, Ted Morgan notes:

> 'Bills originating in the White House were passed almost daily. This was Presidential power without precedent – FDR could dream up an idea, something that had never been tried, and set the huge machinery of government in motion to implement it. For instance, he wanted to take the unemployed out into the woods and give them forestry work. (that became) 'the Civilian Conservation Corps.'
>
> (Morgan, 1985 p.379)

During the first Hundred days, cornerstone New Deal projects such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Social Security Act came to define the ambition and scope

of the New Deal. At this stage it is easy to see the first wave of projects as focusing on emergency measures, relief agencies and urgent personal support.

(a) The First New Deal

The Federal Emergency Relief Act	For the first time, the federal government accepted that unemployment relief should come from Washington and not just be left to the individual states. The Act gave $500 million, to be issued through direct grants to the individual states. The scheme was administered by a key Roosevelt aide, Harry Hopkins who had chaired New York's relief agency In his first two hours as boss of the FERA Hopkins allocated $5 million to state relief agencies but in the longer-term he came to see these payments as potentially destructive to their recipients and he became a staunch advocate of work relief. Hopkins created a range of work-relief schemes such as highway repairs and improvements to public buildings. More than 4 million people were occupied in this way by the winter of 1933.
The Civil Works Administration (CWA)	The work-relief principle was at the centre of this initiative which injected $1 billion into the economy during a five-month period from November 1933. More than 4 million people were employed in large-scale construction and repair projects around roads, schools, hospitals and airports, while ditches were dug and pipes were laid. Whereas the CCC targeted young people, the CWA was aimed at the middle-aged unemployed. This agency was short-lived, expensive and heavily criticized for the nature of the mundane tasks it often entailed.
The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)	After a meeting at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, on the banks of the Tennessee River, FDR began to think out loud about 'the widest experiment ever undertaken by a government' (Alter, 2007 p.287). Embracing no less than seven states, this aimed to develop the whole area of the Tennessee River basin. Innovations included land reclamation, dam building, hydro-electric power, rehousing and recreation. The impact was to boost living standards across the whole region, although lower costs for electricity were not as successful in attracting industry to the area as had been hoped. The TVA was criticized by some for its 'socialist' principles but it was ultimately one of the best received and successful New Deal projects.

The National Industrial Recovery Act

This National Recovery Administration (NRA) tried to negotiate agreements with all major industries to create fair prices, wages and working hours. More than 2 million employers displayed a blue-eagle symbol to show that they were taking part in the scheme.

This National Recovery Administration (NRA) tried to negotiate agreements with all major industries to create fair prices, wages and working hours. More than 2 million employers displayed a blue-eagle symbol to show that they were taking part in the scheme.

Section 7a of the Act guaranteed workers the right of collective bargaining.

Roosevelt gave Hugh Johnson the responsibility of administering the NRA, but he ran up against insurmountable opposition. On the one hand, employers resisted the support for trade unions. At the same time, big business did not seem to be creating new jobs.

In 1935 the Supreme Court ruled that the NRA was unconstitutional.

Dallek concludes, 'Although the NRA did add almost two million workers to payrolls, set precedents for minimum wages and maximum hours, and kept the economy on an even keel-or at least from descending into further deflation-it did not come close to ending the Depression' (Dallek, 2017 p.157).

The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA)

Farm prices had been damaged by overproduction. This agency aimed to raise farm prices and income.

Dallek describes Agriculture Secretary Henry A. Wallace as 'a brilliantly effective evangelist for rural America' (Dallek, 2017 p.145).

The AAA 'organised scarcity in action', sought to reduce production and therefore boost prices.

Farmers who cut down acreage or production would receive compensation.

The AAA was a particularly controversial New Deal agency. More than 5 million pigs were slaughtered at a time when many people were going hungry.

Poorer farmers did not benefit. It was mainly larger landowners who felt the improvement in prices.

Sharecroppers and tenants were actually hard-hit by the domestic allotment programme and their poverty worsened.

Alter says 'little or no thought was given to the long-term consequences' (Alter, 2007 p.280).

Kennedy says 'the New Dealers faith in agricultural revival as the master key to general prosperity was quaintly anachronistic' (Dallek, 2017 p.145).

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)	The President's personal and long-standing interest in conservation lay at the heart of a plan, breath-taking in its size, ambition and rapidity of execution. This offered short-term work to young men on a variety of conservation projects. 250,000 men (the project excluded women, while Black people were mainly in segregated camps) were quickly put to work planting trees, building dams, constructing log cabins in national parks, extinguishing forest fires, restoring historic battlefield sites and reclaiming swampland. Workers were only paid $1 per day leading to some criticism, but the scheme was widely popular attracting almost 3 million men during its nine-year existence. 3 billion trees were planted, a billion fish stocked, 30,000 wildlife shelters built, 20 million acres protected from soil erosion and 800 state parks were created. The overall impact in limiting the suffering of families in the Depression was limited.
The Public Works Administration (PWA)	Directed by Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, the PWA had a budget of $3.3 billion which was spent building schools, hospitals and other public buildings.
The Glass–Steagall Banking Act (1933)	Aimed to reform the structure of the banking system separating commercial from investment banking. Restricted commercial banks in terms of investment and speculation. More reserves were made available to banks. Set up the Federal Bank Deposit Insurance Corporation to secure individual deposits under $5,000. FDR was a reluctant signatory to legislation described by the economist Milton Friedman as 'the single most important structural change' to the American economy since the Civil War (Alter, 2007 p.305).
The Securities and Exchange Act (1934)	Tried to reduce the prospect of a stock market failure as in 1929. The federal government was given power to regulate stock exchanges and purchase of stocks 'on the margin' was prohibited without a deposit of at least 55 per cent of the purchase price.

Noted presidential biographer Jean Edward Smith states:

> When the hundred days ended in the early morning hours of June 16, Congress had shattered all precedent for legislative activity. Roosevelt had sent fifteen messages to the Hill, and Congress had responded with fifteen historic pieces of legislation. FDR's mastery of the legislative process was complete. He compromised when compromise was necessary, zigzagged when required, but in the end saw his program through. 'It's more than a New Deal,' said Interior secretary Harold Ickes. 'It's a new world.' (Smith, 2007 p.332)

Jonathan Alter's excellent study of 'The Hundred Days' looks at what Roosevelt had done to the presidency itself:

> The first Hundred days were over, with a new standard in place for all future presidents to measure themselves against. It wasn't just that Roosevelt, with the help of Congress, had pushed through the most legislation in the shortest time in American history. In a flash, he had transformed the presidency and the role of Washington.
>
> (Alter, 2007 p.306)

(b) Criticism of the New Deal

After positive results for the Democrats in the 1934 mid-term Congressional elections the *New York Times* concluded, 'the New Deal had won the most overwhelming victory in the history of American politics'. William Allen White proclaimed that FDR had been 'all but crowned by the people'. However, the problem of unemployment stubbornly remained. Despite huge public spending and hectic legislation, the fact remained that at the start of 1934 there were still 11.3 million people without work. Although Roosevelt's initial measures enjoyed widespread support, criticism began to emerge by 1934. In a novel published in that year, one of the characters bitterly exclaimed: 'What the hell has happened to everything? You read in the paper things have never been so good; there's never been so much prosperity; the God-damned stock market is booming; and then you find out you can't get work; everybody's losing his job, or their wages are being cut' (cited in Traynor, 1987 p.32). In late 1934, a Pennsylvanian observed: 'The forgotten man is still forgotten … the New Deal and N. R. A. has only helped big business' (McElvaine, 1983 p.14). A letter sent to the White House in 1935 exclaimed: 'We're about down and out and the only good thing about it that I see is that there's not much further down we can go' (McElvaine, 1983 Introduction). A writer from Missouri bitterly claimed that 'Roosevelt's statement some time ago that no one would starve is just another broken promise' (McElvaine, 1983 p.13).

(c) Critics of the New Deal

1 Huey Long

Long was the flamboyant governor of Louisiana. A charismatic, ambitious, political operator, he was seen by his opponents as a dangerous demagogue. Known as the 'Kingfish', his dominance of his own state and gradual move from supporter to critic of Roosevelt led him to entertain Presidential ambitions. In January 1934 Long launched his 'share our wealth' campaign with the slogan 'Every Man a King', and the promise that, if elected, he would confiscate all personal fortunes over $3 million and distribute it, so that every ordinary

citizen would receive between $4,000 and $5,000. The richest members of society, in particular the wealthy bankers and high financiers, would see their wealth capped. While Long's critics maintained that his plans were economically implausible, his energetic delivery and easy promises generated significant support, especially among the poorest farmers in the Southern states

2 Father Charles Coughlin

Coughlin was a Canadian born Catholic so would never have been eligible to run for the American presidency but nevertheless came to represent a real threat to Roosevelt in terms of his hold on the public imagination. A Catholic priest, he had moved to Royal Oak, Michigan, where from 1926 he attracted increasing attention with his radio sermons on the CBS network, which eventually generated a weekly audience in excess of 30 million people. In 1934 he founded the National Union for Social Justice which lobbied in support of his banking policies but was also explicitly anti-Semitic. While Long generated support in rural areas, Coughlin developed a significant power base among the urban working classes in the Midwest and the North.

3 Dr Francis Townsend

A doctor from Long Beach, California, Townsend had personally witnessed the impact of the depression on the savings of old people. He devised a plan – the Townsend Old Age Revolving Pension Plan – to boost the American economy, based on the idea of paying a pension of $200 a month to every American over sixty. In return, they had to retire at sixty and spend their $200 within the month. Townsend argued that the retirement scheme would create jobs for younger people; the spending plan would increase demand for consumer goods, and in turn create more jobs. For a time, particularly when the honeymoon period of FDR's presidency appeared to be on the wane, speculation that Townsend could help to form an anti-Roosevelt coalition appealing to radicals, labour groups and small farmers was enough to cause some concern in the White House. By January 1934 his following at 'Townsend Clubs' seemed increasingly messianic.

The 'thunder from the left', of men like Long and Townsend, was not the only criticism directed at Roosevelt. In the election campaign of 1932, Roosevelt had promised to balance the budget; by 1934 his conservative opponents were criticizing him for spending too much money, encouraging the growth of trade unions, and increasing taxation. Backed by the wealth of the DuPont family, important businessmen set up the American Liberty League, a group that criticized Roosevelt for betraying his own class. In addition, many ordinary people wrote to Roosevelt to tell him that the New Deal had let them down. Typical, was this comment from a man from Los Angeles, California, who told Roosevelt: 'You are multi-millionaires, what do you care for the masses of people?' (McElvaine, 1983 p.177)

21.6 THE SECOND NEW DEAL

It is now widely accepted that the central purpose of the New Deal was to save American capitalism. While some experts have emphasized the continuity of the New Deal across the period 1933–8 others find the concept of a first and second New Deal to be a helpful distinction. The measures which constituted what is sometimes called the Second New Deal have been characterized by historians as a more radical and reformist programme than the first one with a less conciliatory attitude towards business. This is contrasted with the First New Deal, with its emphasis on emergency measures of immense scope, a

myriad of legislation, a distinctive group of advisers, a sense of firefighting and a spirit of cooperation between government and business.

Several factors combined together in 1934–5 to oblige Roosevelt to give the New Deal a new direction. First, Roosevelt was keenly aware of the forthcoming Presidential election in November 1936. Critics such as Long and Townsend had attracted considerable support. Many observers anticipated that Long would run as a Presidential candidate in 1936. Secondly, despite the unprecedented legislative activity of 1933–4, at the start of 1935, 11 million people were still without work and the economy appeared becalmed. Industrial relations had deteriorated in 1934 and strike action had afflicted the automobile, coal and steel industries.

Some authorities have claimed that the sheer scale and reforming ambition of the fresh batch of legislation instigated in 1935 amounted to a 'Second New Deal'. They contend that the Second New Deal represented a radical programme based on genuine social and economic reform and was more concerned with those at the bottom of the economic system. Others claim that a clear pattern in the development of the New Deal is more difficult to discern. They argue that FDR had no systematic programme and emphasize that the President was a pragmatist rather than an idealist. Finally, it has been pointed out that some of the measures of the Second New Deal had in fact been in preparation for some time and that some of them were initiated by Congress rather than the President. They see the New Deal change direction and shift its emphasis, but do not accept the notion of two, separate, New Deals.

(a) Key elements of the Second New Deal

1 The Works Progress Administration (WPA), 1935

The WPA accounted for one-third of the total government money allotted to poor relief. Over eight years the WPA spent around 11 billion dollars and gave work to more than 8.5 million people. Its projects included the construction of schools, hospitals, airport runways and urban renewal. More radically, the WPA encompassed support for writers and artists through agencies such as the Federal Writer's Project and the Federal Arts Project. This was the type of activity that drew the sharpest criticism from opponents of FDR who claimed that the government was completely over-reaching the constitutional limits to its jurisdiction.

2 The rural electrification administration

This addressed the fact that nine out of ten American farms had no electricity supply. This agency encouraged farmers to join together to borrow money from the government to build power lines. By 1941, four out of ten American farmers had electricity, and by 1951 the figure had reached nine out of ten.

3 The National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act)

This Act stemmed from the initiative of Senator Robert Wagner. The Supreme Court had ruled that the National Industrial Recovery Act was unconstitutional and had therefore removed the safeguard to collective bargaining encompassed in its Section 7a. The Wagner Act reaffirmed the government's support for the worker's right to join trade unions. It created a new National Labor Relations Board which campaigned against unfair labour practices, including the use of blacklists for union members.

(b) The presidential election of 1936 and the 'Roosevelt Recession of 1937'

It is tempting to assume that Roosevelt cruised to an untroubled second election victory on a universal wave of gratitude from the thankful American people. In fact, the path to four more years in the White House was much more complex, even though the outcome was a crushing defeat of the Republican candidate. First, the personal strain of dealing with the economic catastrophe was significant. FDR was finding the responsibility of the highest office arduous, leading one observer to describe him, in 1935, as 'on edge' and 'dangerously tired' (Dallek, 2017 p.232). On his worst days, the prospect of a further four years made him feel less than enthusiastic. His low-key approach to the second election campaign prompted his 'aghast and angry' (Dallek, 2017 p.237) wife, to write furious memos demanding a more concerted effort from her husband.

Secondly, the initial excitement of the Hundred Days had now given way to the growing realization that the economic malaise was utterly entrenched, with the limitations of the New Deal increasingly apparent. Thirdly, and of profound importance was the growing debate about the president's direction of travel. When the Supreme Court ruled in May 1935 that the NRA had exceeded its constitutional limits, in a test case over inter-state commerce regarding a poultry corporation, what was at stake were huge questions about the essence of the New Deal and of American government itself. The nine judges in the Supreme Court had taken a 'states-rights decision', what Roosevelt called 'the horse-and-buggy definition of interstate commerce' that placed authority locally. The president stood in the opposite corner, advocating in this instance the power of the centralized government. FDR wondered aloud how he could deal with the country's profound economic problems if his authority was being held in check by the judicial branch of the government.

In a cabinet meeting of December 1935 the president anticipated that 'all of the New Deal bills will be declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. This will mean that everything that this administration has done of any moment will be nullified.' It is a measure of how much the president divided opinion, that the *Chicago Tribune* hailed the Supreme Court decision as the triumph of 'Constitutionalism' over 'Hitlerism', while one of the judges enthused that 'the New Deal is on the rocks' (Dallek, 2017 p.244). While some of the wealthiest elements of American society now regarded FDR as a traitor to his class, it was becoming clear that Roosevelt stood not just for economic recovery but what David Kennedy has called, 'lasting social reform and durable political realignment' (Dallek, 2017 p.248).

These were the background issues, then, that made the 1936 presidential election resemble, to some extent, a referendum on FDR himself and the philosophy of intervention. Many were genuinely grateful to Roosevelt and cheered him when he stated, on the campaign trail in New York in September 1936, that thanks to his policies 'starvation was averted, homes and farms were saved, banks were reopened, crop prices rose, and industry revived' (Dallek, 2017 p.261). On the other hand, his many opponents found his ideas dangerous and yearned for a return to fiscal conservatism.

Despite these tumultuous events, the Democratic Convention of June 1936 acclaimed the achievements of the New Deal and re-nominated Roosevelt as its candidate for the forthcoming Presidential election. Roosevelt's opponent was Alfred Landon, the Republican Governor of Kansas. The results showed that despite the difficulties he was facing and the savagery of the criticism he endured, Roosevelt was at the height of his public support and in a landslide victory, he secured every state, except Maine and Vermont. Roosevelt won 60.4 per cent of the popular vote. The inaugural speech of January 1937 promised new attention for the 'ill-housed, ill-clad and ill-nourished' and seemed to herald a further radical chapter of reform. In reality, the momentum of the New Deal was ebbing away. The flood of legislation had ended. Support for the President's programme within Congress and within his own party was diminished.

(c) The recession of 1937

At the start of 1937 the economic indicators appeared to point towards a continuing improvement in the American economy. During the spring, industrial output finally rose above the levels of 1929. Although the unemployment rate at the start of 1936 was 16.9 per cent of the total work force, the public work schemes of the second phase of the New Deal had helped to reduce unemployment to 7.7 million. Nevertheless, some of the New Deal agencies attracted criticism on the grounds that the jobs they created were not genuine. For example the WPA was heavily criticized and the word 'boondoggling' was coined to describe the allegedly trivial nature of the work it offered.

In August 1937 the recovery lost its momentum and the country began to move into recession. Industrial activity suddenly fell away. In just three months steel production declined from 80 per cent of capacity to 19 per cent. On a single day 7 million shares were sold on the stock market, stirring terrible memories of the Crash of October 1929. Roosevelt was stunned by this turn of events and was persuaded to reduce government spending. Thousands of workers employed by the WPA were laid off. The big automobile manufacturers reduced production and thousands of unsold cars were stored on huge parking lots.

In November 1937, Roosevelt announced details of his new programme to combat the recession. This included new regulation of working hours and wages, farm legislation, abolition of child labour and further measures against trusts. Despite these actions the recession took a grip and unemployment began to increase, so that by 1938 over 10 million people were once again without work. Some of Roosevelt's critics gloated over the irony of the president presiding over a slump and referred to the 'Roosevelt recession'. The economic reverses of late 1937–8 that saw unemployment levels soar may have led Roosevelt to ease back on his spending programmes.

The serious industrial unrest of 1937 was in sharp contrast to the mood which Roosevelt had been able to exploit in the crisis years of 1933–4. By 1938 the President was increasingly pre-occupied with the dark clouds being generated overseas by the rise of dictatorships in Italy and Germany, and concerns about the situation in the Far East. While this partially explains why Roosevelt's second term in office lacked the energy and sense of urgency he had displayed in the first four years, Fiona Venn points out that it would be wrong to conclude that the New Deal came to an end in 1937:

> The WPA and PWA continued with their projects, reaching virtually every corner of the vast United States … New Dealers, at both local level and in Washington, DC, continued to work enthusiastically for causes in which they believed; but much of what was achieved in the second term amounted to the continuation and consolidation of the achievements of the first term, rather than the recasting of the reform agenda. New initiatives were fewer on the ground, took longer to pass through Congress and were frequently rendered less effective by limited appropriation. (Venn, 1998 p.84–5)

Nevertheless, new measures introduced by Roosevelt in 1938 included the second Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). This allowed the Agriculture Secretary to fix marketing quotas for export crops and created the Commodity Credit Corporation to store crop surpluses. The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation was introduced to guarantee minimum crop prices for farmers. But the scale of these measures was limited compared to the great measures of 1933. Some economists contend that Roosevelt simply stopped spending too soon. They argue that he needed to maintain his earlier policy of injecting huge sums of cash into the economy. Once Roosevelt stopped 'priming the pump' the economy was

bound to move back into recession. Others would contend that the jobs created by the New Deal did not generate wealth and were essentially artificial.

21.7 A NEW DEAL FOR WOMEN?

In broad terms, women had tended not to enjoy the economic advantages secured by many men during the 1920s. Women were generally employed in menial occupations, paid less than men and subject to the prevailing mentality that their chief responsibility was to raise children and look after the family home. At the same time, the fact that many working-class males needed their partner to supplement their income drove increasingly large numbers of women into the work place. By 1930 virtually a quarter of the national work force were women. When the Depression began, many poorly paid women, particularly those working in the textile industry, were quickly laid off. At the same time, middle-class families were quick to shed domestic help when the economic climate deteriorated. Given that domestic service was a major employer of working-class women, this was a major factor in increasing female unemployment. The impact on the relatively small number of women employed in the professions was more evident in terms of falling pay rather than outright unemployment. Female teachers, for example, generally retained their jobs, but had to accept sweeping pay cuts. More positively, the fact that many women worked in clerical posts and service industries tended to shelter them from the most damaging forces of the Depression which were felt in the manufacturing industry. Of course, women managing households without an adult male breadwinner were faced with a perpetual struggle against poverty. Many women were placed under immense psychological pressure through the mental suffering of their male partner when they were thrown on the breadline.

The fortunes of women in terms of the New Deal were rather mixed. While the National Industrial Recovery Act (NRA) attempted to work with employers to improve working conditions and introduce minimum rates of pay, many women fell outside the remit of its measures. The NRA, for example, did not regulate domestic service. Even when women's jobs did fall within the NRA, the New Deal agency established rates of pay for women which were between 15 and 30 per cent lower than those paid to men. More positively, the jobs provided by the WPA helped many women to survive the Depression. Through the Women's and Professional Division of the WPA, women were offered jobs in areas such as librarianship, teaching and nursing. In addition, the work of Eleanor Roosevelt, who led a White House conference on the Emergency Needs of Women, led to women being offered paid work for helping with the distribution of food and clothing to the needy.

21.8 THE RURAL DEPRESSION

If the banking crisis was seen by most people as the single most pressing issue when FDR came to power, many of those at the very centre of the New Deal believed that the plight of the agricultural economy came in second place. In setting up the Agricultural Adjustment Agency so quickly, Alter notes that 'almost overnight, FDR established the principle that Washington bore responsibility for farm prices and should pay farmers to create scarcity' (Alter, 2007 p.281). Why was agriculture seen as so central to American recovery? The impact of the Depression was felt across the whole of rural America. Overproduction had dogged American agriculture throughout the 1920s. In Mississippi, it was said that times were as 'tough as jail house stew'. In 1931 in the Mid-Western corn belt, prices for hogs (pigs) went into the sharpest yearly decline ever recorded. Widespread distress led to

increasingly bitter scenes. In England, Arkansas, in January 1931, 300 desperate farmers announced that if they were not provided with food, they would be left with no choice but to loot stores.

(a) The Dust Bowl

The exceptionally difficult climatic conditions which afflicted many farm states between 1932 and 1936 brought new levels of despair. In this period, virtually no rain fell across the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, North and South Dakota. Across the whole region, scorched top soil simply turned to dust. A combination of intense heat and strong winds then meant that this dry top soil was blown away. Previously green and fertile land now took on the appearance of a desert. Millions of acres of farmland between the Rockies and the Appalachians were affected. Hurricanes and tornadoes devastated the Mid-West; it has been calculated that in April 1933 alone there were 179 dust storms.

(b) The return of rural prosperity

In common with other aspects of the economy it was not so much the New Deal but the stimulus of the wartime economy which eventually restored rural prosperity. Total farm cash income was $9,105 million in 1940 but this had increased to $22,405 million by 1945. By this time, longer-term trends can be observed, such as the demise of the sharecropping system, the decline of tenant farming and a gradual reduction in the number of people employed in the agricultural sector. By 1945, the number of farms in the United States was 5.9 million, compared to 6.4 million in 1920.

(c) New Deal agricultural projects

1 The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
Created on 18 May 1933, it encompassed projects not just in Tennessee but also in North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia. The large-scale projects in these states transformed the whole region and boosted the prosperity of farmers through general investment and widespread electrification programmes.

2 The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)
Set up on 31 March 1933 under the terms of the Unemployment Relief Act, it operated for seven years. At the centre of this agency were projects of reforestation and soil conservation. It offered work in newly created camps for men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five in return for pay of $30 a month. By the autumn of 1935, over 500,000 young men were working in CCC camps. They constructed more than 30,000 wildlife shelters and restored battlefields from the Civil War and the War of Independence.

3 The Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA)
This was the central farm relief measure of the New Deal. Its basic premise was to pay farmers to reduce crop acreage. Few New Deal agencies aroused as much controversy as the AAA, which was run by George Peek but was under the ultimate authority of Roosevelt's Agriculture Secretary, Henry Wallace. The AAA responded to the problem of low farm prices caused by an abundance of crops and livestock. It was decided to raise prices by destroying surplus crops and livestock. Although in 1936 the Supreme Court

ruled the AAA unconstitutional, Congress later returned to the policy of subsidizing farmers through further legislation.

21.9 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DURING THE NEW DEAL ERA

Even at the height of domestic misery in the winter of 1932–3 there was little evidence of genuine militancy among the nation's unemployed, or from those who remained in work. American popular culture in the 1930s continued to extol the virtues of free enterprise and suspicion of radicalism was widespread. Yet a glance at the figures shows the dramatic rise in labour union membership which took place during the New Deal era. The Norris–LaGuardia Act of 1932 outlawed the use of injunctions against striking labour unions. Further support to the growth of the labour unions was provided with the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act, which guaranteed the right to collective bargaining. Meanwhile, many employers turned to the increasing use of 'company spies' – armed bands of private armies and strike-breakers. In the 1937 Memorial Day Massacre in Chicago, police fired upon striking steel workers resulting in four deaths and more than eighty injuries. 'Sit-down' strikes in the automobile industry enabled the Committee on Industrial Organizations (CIO) to obtain union recognition from every car manufacturer with the exception of Ford. Public concern about the growing power of the unions and Roosevelt's defence of organized labour served only to undermine his standing with those who were fearful of the risk of a radicalized workforce.

21.10 ASSESSMENTS OF THE NEW DEAL

Maldwyn A. Jones observes,

> For all its failures and limitations, the New Deal can claim achievements which have stood the test of time and have become part of the national consensus. It laid the foundations of the welfare state and created a new legal framework for industrial relations. It introduced much-needed controls on banks and stock exchanges. It established the principle that government had the primary responsibility for regulating the economy. Roosevelt … restored national morale. The New Deal permanently enlarged the role of the Federal government. It gave American capitalism a more humane aspect. While it did nothing to redistribute wealth or income, it redistributed power between capital and labor. Finally, Roosevelt raised the presidential office to a new peak of prestige and power. He revitalized and dramatized the Presidency.
>
> (Jones, 1995 p.476)

William Leuchtenburg provides this assessment of the New Deal in which he claims,

> Franklin Roosevelt re-created the modern Presidency. He took an office which had lost much of its prestige and power in the previous twelve years and gave it an importance which went well beyond what even Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had done …. Roosevelt greatly expanded the President's legislative functions … (However the New Deal) never demonstrated that it could achieve prosperity in peacetime. As late as 1941, the unemployed still numbered 6 million and not until the war year of 1943 did the army of jobless finally disappear.
>
> (Leuchtenburg, 1963 p.327, 346–7)

In his excellent summary of the New Deal, Anthony Badger states,

> The success of the New Deal's efforts to secure industrial recovery was strictly limited. Between 1933 and 1937 the American economy grew at an annual rate of 10 per cent, but output had fallen so low after 1929 that even this growth left 14 per cent of the work force unemployed. A recession in 1937 quickly shot the unemployment rate back up to 19 per cent. Well into 1941 unemployment remained at over 10 per cent … It was World War II, not the New Deal, that was to shape the political economy of industrial and financial America … The deficiencies of the New Deal were glaring. As the 9 000 000 unemployed in 1939 testified, the policies for industrial recovery did not work … Roosevelt never pretended that his aim was anything other than to save and preserve capitalism.
>
> (Badger, 1989 p.66, 67, 299, 303)

Historians are now very aware of the relatively conservative parameters of the New Deal in that as a force for radical reform it had clear limitations. It only reinforced the prevailing gender stereotypes and did nothing to address the issues presented by racism. The most significant changes associated with the New Deal were to alter the role of the federal government, enhance the power of the executive branch and to begin the process that would lead to the development of what could be called an 'imperial presidency'.

21.11 THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1940

At the Democratic Party Convention held in July Roosevelt stated that he would not be prepared to break the 'George Washington' precedent and actively seek re-nomination; however, the reality was that the party was ready to support Roosevelt for an unprecedented third term. His campaign staff soon rallied a nomination on the first ballot: FDR polled 946 votes with James Farley a distant second with only 72 votes. The choice of the avowedly liberal Henry A. Wallace as running-mate was not universally popular and would be reversed four years later. By October, the campaign revolved chiefly around the issue of the war. The Republican candidate, Wendell Wilkie (Indiana) raised fears that Roosevelt would take the country into the war. In response, a week before polling day, Roosevelt told his audience in Boston: 'Your boys are not going to be sent to fight in any foreign wars' (Kennedy, 1999 p. 463). The President's emphatic statement was enough to secure victory by a comfortable margin but given the unparalleled experience of his opponent, Wilkie did rather well, particularly in the Mid-West farm states. FDR gained more than 27 million popular votes with a margin of 5 million over his opponent. In the Electoral College, the gap looked emphatic, with 449 to 82 in FDR's favour. It was a satisfying victory for a ground-breaking third term but new, darker challenges lay ahead for the president.

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Chapter

22 USA 1945–68: Uneven prosperity

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

This chapter examines the domestic achievements of the four presidents who served the United States between 1945 and 1968. It is striking that while they came from very different backgrounds and of course, two very different political parties, the problems they faced at home were remarkably similar across the decades, particularly poverty and racism. Truman's task between 1945 and 1949 was made immeasurably more difficult by the transition from war-time to peace. As we will see, this created complexities in farming, food production and industrial relations that made the president feel that it was difficult to achieve anything, particularly with a hostile Congress. Truman's limitations were also apparent in his failure to secure significant improvements in the lives of African-Americans.

At first glance, Eisenhower, who served from 1953 to 1961 enjoyed greater serenity than his predecessor. Eisenhower had strong convictions that the president should limit the scale of his activity. As he rode a wave of prosperity in his first term it became clear that the United States far surpassed all of its competitors both economically and militarily. This economic success enabled Eisenhower to cruise to a second-term victory in the election of 1956. However, his second term was much more challenging than the first, most of all when it came to the matter of race. The rise of the civil rights movement exposed not just the weakness of American society but also of the presidents who tried to resolve the catastrophic problem at the heart of the American way of live. Eisenhower's efforts to deal with civil rights were limited and often clumsy. His successor, President Kennedy addressed the issues more eloquently but was unable to find solutions because of the opposition he faced in the Congress. When Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, the problem of civil rights seemed as pressing as ever. It fell to his successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson to use all of his political skill and drive to secure long-overdue civil rights legislation. Meanwhile, the prosperity which so many Americans enjoyed remained stubbornly uneven. The fact that the final president serving in the period 1945–68 had to declare a 'war on poverty' tells us that his three post-war predecessors had all failed to settled the inequality that is so striking in American society. We will now look at each of those four presidents in turn and assess why matters of poverty and racial inequality were often neglected.

22.1 TRUMAN'S BACKGROUND AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1944

Truman served with distinction in the Great War, bounced back from business setbacks in the 1920s and was elected to the US Senate in 1934. Ten years later, his reputation as a steady domestic politician allowed him to run as FDR's Vice-Presidential candidate. The visible decline in Roosevelt's health raised doubts as to whether he would be able to serve the full term. In contrast to the tired president, who as 'a good soldier' agreed to run for

an unprecedented fourth term, the Republican candidate, Thomas Dewey, was young and dynamic. It was the closest of the four victories with Roosevelt/Truman polling more than 25.6 million popular votes compared to Dewey's 22 million. In normal times, the office of Vice President was often derided, but in April 1945, the haberdasher from Missouri, succeeded FDR. In August, the fledgling president displayed the brutal power of his office when he personally signed the order to deploy the atomic bomb, destroying first Hiroshima, and a few days later, Nagasaki.

While Truman's willingness to use the new weapon implied immense authority, domestic matters were challenging. On the positive side, the United States emerged from the Second World War with unparalleled supremacy and industrial capacity. Although government spending was sharply curtailed after August 1945, the widely predicted return to Depression did not materialize and pent-up consumer demand led to an era of prosperity not witnessed since the 1920s. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly known as the 'GI Bill of Rights', gave low-interest loans for housing, and funded education and training for ex-servicemen. Truman's 'Fair Deal', promised full employment, an increase in the minimum wage, national health insurance and the extension of Social Security. Beyond this, Tuman struggled. Alarmed by inflation and widespread industrial disputes, Truman asked Congress for powers to draft striking railroad workers into the Army. This 'solution' shocked even his conservative opponents. In 1946 the Democrats lost control of both the Senate and the House for the first time since 1932. Although Congress did not completely unravel the New Deal, it effectively blocked virtually all of his domestic proposals. Truman was unable to prevent the passage of the controversial national Management Relations (Taft–Hartley) Act which restored the balance of power to the bosses. The closed shop and secondary strikes became illegal.

If the limitations of presidential authority were apparent, they were magnified on the issue of civil rights for African-Americans. In 1945, 'Segregation had become almost an American way of life. The American Red Cross even segregated the plasma of white and black blood donors' (Reynolds, 2009 p.367). Victory over Fascism raised expectations among black people, but Truman's Missouri background offered no particular preparation for civil rights reform and as late as 1945 he was using unacceptable racial remarks in his personal papers. It was not until February 1948, with the presidential election looming, that Truman despatched a special message to Congress recommending legislation to:

- End segregation in interstate travel
- Make lynching a federal crime
- Take measures to end the poll tax
- Create a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission

In fact, Truman was unable to secure any progress in these areas. Southern filibustering sealed the fate of his civil-rights bill and his actions prompted a violent white backlash in the South. Once again, the influence of the Oval Office seemed limited. Despite this, an important landmark came in July 1948 with an executive order which ended segregation in the armed forces.

22.2 TRUMAN IN OFFICE 1948–53

Truman alienated Southern Democrats to such an extent that a faction broke away from the party and set up the States' Rights Democratic Party (the Dixiecrats) with the governor of South Carolina, Strom Thurmond, as their Presidential candidate. The Republicans again nominated Thomas E. Dewey for President, anticipating victory for the first time since 1928. Yet Truman became increasingly self-confident in his campaign dealings and

the pundits were confounded when he went on to secure a narrow victory in November 1948. In his first full-term he faced a damaging phenomenon inextricably linked in the public mind with Joseph McCarthy. An obscure Senator from Wisconsin, he rejuvenated his career with sensational allegations concerning communist infiltration of the State Department. More recently, historians have placed McCarthy in perspective, observing that the anti-communist movement was already in full swing when the opportunistic, hard-drinking Senator made his infamous speech on 9 February 1950, in Wheeling, West Virginia, in which he claimed that more than fifty communists had infiltrated the State Department. 'Jolting Joe' rocked the East Coast establishment with his allegations of 'red infiltration' and the Korean War heightened the conviction that the communists were relentless. Buffeted by McCarthyism, an uncooperative Congress and a militant workforce, Truman felt that his successor, the military leader, General Eisenhower, would also find the presidency exasperating. From behind his desk in the Oval Office, he famously told staff: 'He'll sit right here and he'll say do this, do that! And nothing will happen. Poor Ike – it won't be a bit like the Army. He'll find it very frustrating' (McCullough, 1993 p.914).

22.3 PRESIDENT EISENHOWER

(a) Ike's background and upbringing

Born in Texas in 1890, Dwight David Eisenhower graduated from West Point in 1915 and from the Command and General Staff School, Kansas, in 1925. He secured important posts in Washington, DC, and during the war he was placed in command of the Operations Division and subsequently became the supreme commander of Operation Overlord. His leadership qualities were reflected in the successful D-Day landings of June 1944. He was the outstanding allied military figure of the Second World War and both parties saw him as an outstanding presidential candidate. However, he held strong beliefs about the division between military and political authority. However, Truman's surprise victory in November 1948 led Republicans to conclude that only Eisenhower could change their fortunes. Truman's victory in 1948 and the failure to secure victory in Korea between 1950 and 1952 created in Eisenhower a new sense of duty. Ultimately he let it be known that while he would not seek the presidency, he would be open to the call of the highest service and he received the Republican Presidential nomination in July 1952. Privately, he decided that if elected he would visit Korea to appraise the situation. In late October, he announced that if elected he would personally 'go there' to bring the war to an 'honourable end'. This was a major factor in enabling him to achieve a major victory. Eisenhower received 55.1 per cent of the total ballot. Securing all but nine states, he had received a mandate to bring the war to an end.

Even with a Republican in the White House, McCarthy continued to level accusations, particularly when he took over the Senate's Permanent Investigating Subcommittee. While Eisenhower felt contempt for McCarthy, he told his closest advisers that he refused to 'get into the gutter with that guy' (Shrecker, 1994 p.64). McCarthy now turned his attention away from the government and towards the Army. But the televised Army hearings of 1954, revealed McCarthy as a bully and the Senate overwhelmingly condemned his conduct. His health rapidly deteriorated and he died in 1957.

(b) The rise of an affluent society

The expanding economy of the 1950s also saw a rapid increase in population which became known as the 'baby boom'. This was accompanied by the development of

suburban communities and within the home, an array of labour-saving domestic gadgets. Nevertheless, household chores and child care were regarded as fundamentally female tasks. The Eisenhower administration, with its emphasis on successful white businessmen did nothing to challenge these attitudes and it would not be until the 1960s that assumptions about women would be widely questioned. Eisenhower's called his approach to domestic affairs, 'dynamic conservatism' and his Cabinet included an array of wealthy businessmen. However, he was also responsible for the creation of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and presided over the extension of unemployment and social security benefits. The administration developed a 'soil bank' plan, for farmers who were being asked to cut output so as to reduce the problem of overproduction. In 1956 Eisenhower secured Congressional backing for The Interstate Highway Act, a ten-year road-building programme with safer, four-to-eight-lane freeways would ultimately cost $25 billion. The Tidelands Oil Act (1953) was a presidential initiative which led to the state taking over the ownership of valuable offshore oil deposits in the Gulf of Mexico and off the Pacific Coast.

22.4 AFRICAN AMERICANS UNDER EISENHOWER

In the early 1950s, the 'Jim Crow' system of racial segregation remained in place in the Deep South. Children attended separate schools, the Ku Klux Klan remained active and the black electorate were deterred by poll taxes, literacy tests and intimidation. Inferior housing, jobs and schools, lower life expectancy and greater risk of imprisonment made the position of African Americans completely unacceptable. The step change in civil rights came from the judicial rather than the executive branch. It was the Supreme Court, under the dynamic liberal leadership of Chief Justice Earl Warren of California, that led the way. In May 1954, he made one of the most important legal decisions of the century. The Supreme Court unanimously accepted the argument put forward by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) that the notion of 'separate but equal' as it was applied to education was a contradiction in terms. 'Separate but equal' was a concept dating back to the Supreme Court's judgement in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896). For decades this ruling was used to support racial segregation in education on the grounds that black and white children could be educated separately as long as they received equal quality. This was overturned by a new ruling that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional because 'separate educational facilities are inherently inferior'. Even so, a decision that had sounded like a step change in 1954 seemed more ambiguous a year later, when the Court ruled that the process of desegregating schools should begin 'with all deliberate speed'. The ambiguity of the word 'deliberate' was not wasted on those who wanted to keep segregation in the South.

While the Ku Klux Klan terrorized many black people in the Deep South, the less ritualized but possibly more effective campaigns of Citizens' Councils showed that the South would not resist integration by violence alone. Within days of Brown v. Board of Education, Judge Tom Brady, based in Mississippi, issued a pamphlet denouncing 'Black Monday'. His document became the handbook of middle-class resistance to desegregation that manifested itself as the Citizens' Council movement. The first such council was formed in Mississippi but the movement spread rapidly and soon numbered 300,000 members across seven states. The horrific murder of fourteen-year-old, Emmett Till, in Mississippi in 1955, showed that daily life in the Deep South would not be altered by a judicial ruling.

Attention then turned to Montgomery, Alabama, where, in December 1955, Mrs Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a crowded bus. Her arrest fuelled a boycott of the City Lines bus company that would last for more than a year and inflict unsustainable damage

on the company itself and the local economy. The subsequent high-profile involvement of the emerging Martin Luther King Jr. in the boycott means that the spectacular activity of one man has sometimes dominated our view of a movement that was in fact complex, church-based and had grassroots support across the Deep South.

The 'Jim Crow' system gradually began to crumble not just because of the much-publicized work of King but also because, an increasing number of African Americans from a broad range of backgrounds, began to act together, encouraged by each further step along the way to desegregation. Transport, schools, lunch counters and stores each became focal points for the burgeoning movement. While King brought conviction, dignity and exceptional oratory skills to the campaign, the civil rights movement was so effective because it became such a broad-based protest of the people and assumed a momentum beyond the capacity of any one individual.

In 1957, the nation's attention was drawn to a previously white-only Central High School, in Little Rock, Arkansas. When the local school board attempted to begin desegregation, it aroused the wrath of the White Citizens' Councils and the Governor of Arkansas, Orville Faubus. In September 1957, Faubus responded to the fact that a handful of children would be attempting to enrol at Little Rock High School, by personally sending in the state's National Guard to prevent them joining. When the National Guard had to be withdrawn under federal law they were replaced by a baying crowd.

Dismayed by these 'extremists', the President reluctantly dispatched 1,000 troops from the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock. The press now carried pictures of American troops, bayonets fixed, patrolling a High School. Eisenhower lamented the use which 'our enemies' would make of such scenes, and pleaded with the people of Arkansas to return to 'their normal habits of peace'. His decision to send in the troops has earned praise from historians who recognize that his commitment to defend the Constitution against mob action was the right thing to do at a critical point in time. Black children were admitted to the school but within a year, the school itself was closed down by opponents of de-segregation. As late as 1963, significantly less than 10 per cent of schools in the Deep South were desegregated.

(a) Martin Luther King Jr

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in the segregated city of Atlanta, Georgia in January 1929. He studied for his PhD at Boston College, and in 1954 was appointed Pastor at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, in Montgomery, Alabama. His subsequent achievements in the face of death threats, violence and incarceration were immense. King mobilized a large section of the black community, founding the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). He captured the conscience of the nation, in particular the white middle-class and the East Coast establishment. He influenced Kennedy and Johnson, helping to bring about landmark legislation in the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. His strategy of non-violence was the perfect technique in the face of the brutality used by angry segregationists. Campaigns against discrimination in transport and voter registration, and iconic moments such as the March on Washington speech and the Selma campaign were career highlights.

While Eisenhower was prepared to complete the process of desegregation of the armed forces begun by Truman, he had an abiding distrust of African American militancy. His gradualism left the Supreme Court to set in motion the tide of events which would reach their peak in the Johnson Administration. Eisenhower was reactive not proactive and as late as 1958, he was still advising African Americans to 'be patient'. While the civil rights movement began under Truman and Eisenhower it passed to Kennedy and then Johnson under the heading of unfinished business. Attention now switched to a 'sit-in' at a lunch

counter in a Woolworth store. In February 1960, acting on their own initiative, four young men at the Woolworths counter in Greensboro, North Carolina refused to move when they were denied service. The protest was devastatingly effective and the sit-in movement rapidly spread through the south. The momentum given to grassroots activism was immense and a further bastion of segregation in transport now came under attack. As late as 1961, segregation in transport facilities remained firmly in place. In April 1961, thirteen volunteers, black and white, received training in non-violence strategies ahead of their proposed 'Freedom Ride' travelling from Washington, DC, to New Orleans through the Southern states.

22.5 THE ELECTION OF 1956

Meanwhile, Eisenhower's decision to run for a second term of office in 1956 was not a straightforward one. A heart attack in 1955 made his family feel that he should now enjoy his retirement. Eisenhower feared that in his absence 'crackpot Democrats', including their nominee Adlai Stevenson, would undo his work (Pach and Richardson, 1991 p.115). His campaign for a second term was straightforward. Four years of peace and prosperity enabled the Republican campaign to claim that 'everything's booming but the guns' (Pach and Richardson, 1991 p.126). Eisenhower's landslide victory exposed the aging President to a fresh series of challenges that would make him wonder whether he had made the right decision in running for a second term. 1957 was a difficult year for the American economy: 'The assurance and optimism of the beginning of the second term crumbled because of a series of economic, international and political shocks. The Eisenhower prosperity dissolved into the worst recession since the Great Depression' (Pach and Richardson, 1991 p.159–76). While this period was challenging for Eisenhower, his economic legacy was ultimately far-reaching and positive, although prosperity remained extremely uneven.

22.6 PRESIDENT KENNEDY

Kennedy presented a healthy image to the electorate, but in fact, he was plagued by severe back pain, and had been diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening condition, Addison's disease, in 1947. These issues were carefully concealed when Senator Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Presidency in January 1960. Kennedy appointed Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate, ensuring a more balanced ticket for the young Catholic candidate from Boston by pairing him with the older Protestant running mate from Texas. In his acceptance speech, Kennedy stated America was 'standing on the edge of a New Frontier', while Kennedy's constant reference to the 'missile gap' and to the need to get 'America moving again' helped to undermine Nixon's desire to take credit for the Republican achievements of the 1950s. With a final margin of only 0.1 per cent, Kennedy received 34,226,731 votes compared to 34,108,157 for Nixon. The gap in the popular vote was the smallest in American electoral history.

Inaugurated at the age of forty-three in January 1961, Kennedy's looks, charm and wit seemed to put his aging predecessor in the shade. During the 'Thousand Days' of his Administration the President displayed energy, and a 'capacity for growth' which many historians would draw attention to when he was brutally killed. On 22 November the President and his wife were travelling in a large motorcade procession through the streets of Dallas. They had almost reached their destination when in the space of just eight seconds several shots rang out. An hour later a bewildered nation watched Walter Cronkite, its most respected newsreader struggle to retain his composure as he delivered these brief, shattering words: 'From Dallas, the flash apparently official, President Kennedy died at

one o'clock Central Standard Time-two o'clock Eastern Standard Time-some thirty-eight minutes ago' (Bugliosi, 2007 p.153). Consequently, initial verdicts tended to eulogize Kennedy's White House, as 'Camelot' and drew a veil over his less Presidential activities. In the words of James N. Giglio (1991): 'In many respects how Kennedy died is as important as how he lived' (White, 1998 p.1). More recent accounts have focused on his private life, capacity for excess and concealed health record.

(a) The New Frontier, poverty and education

In his acceptance speech of 1960 Kennedy proclaimed:

> The problems are not all solved and the battles are not all won – and we stand today on the edge of a New Frontier – the Frontier of the 1960's – a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils – a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats. The New Frontier is here whether we seek it or not: unconquered pockets of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus.
>
> (jfklibrary.org)

James N. Giglio has pointed out that Kennedy had the capacity to integrate domestic and foreign concerns which:

> enabled him to broaden the New Frontier label to include initiatives as far reaching as space, the Peace Corps, women's rights, and civil rights. No other presidential rubric, whether it be the Square Deal, the New Deal, or the Fair Deal, was as inclusive or as expansive.
>
> (White, 1998 p.223)

While the Eisenhower administration made the 1950s a successful decade for the middle class, a very significant layer of poverty lay underneath the general prosperity. One estimate is that at the start of the 1960s between 40 and 60 million Americans comprised 'the hidden poor'. Michael Harrington's book *The Other America* 'identified an economic underworld of poor schools, substandard medical care, and dead-end jobs' (Schulman, 1995 p.71).

In office, Kennedy assigned Walter Heller, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, to assemble statistics on poverty. Although Heller produced an anti-poverty package which gained the President's approval it was decided to leave the measures until after the 1964 election, given the legislative log-jam being stored up in Congress. Following Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 the future of the anti-poverty package passed into the hands of Lyndon Johnson. Johnson told Heller, 'That's my kind of program. Go ahead. Give it the highest priority.' Within a month of taking office, Johnson used his State of the Union Address to declare, 'unconditional war on poverty in America' (Dallek, 1998 p.60–1).

In education, the county faced huge shortages in both qualified teachers and classrooms. Kennedy biographer Robert Dallek shows how the president may have calculated that a reticent, cautious approach to civil rights might induce southern politicians to lend support to his proposals for education and Medicare. However, as early as October 1961 his aides advised him that 'the passage of any broad-scale education legislation will be a most difficult task. A broad program of grants to States for public school construction and teacher's salaries is virtually impossible to pass. There is substantial Southern opposition to any bill for elementary and secondary schools' (Dallek, 2003 p.495). Kennedy attempted to address the issues of school construction and teachers' salaries but Congressional opposition,

fuelled by issues of religion and desegregation, led to the rejection of a number of White House initiatives such as the defeat of the omnibus School Assistance Bill in 1961.

(b) Civil rights

Kennedy was certainly without prejudice towards African Americans. He personally removed his campaign team from a hotel in Paducah, Kentucky, when he discovered that a black reporter had been denied a room there. A more public gesture came in October 1960, when Kennedy phoned Mrs Coretta King to offer support following the sentencing of her husband Martin Luther King, Jr to four months of hard labour, following a traffic violation. This was a turning point in the 1960 election, and Kennedy consequently secured around 70 per cent of the African American vote. How much attention did Kennedy pay to the civil rights issue once he was in office? Maldwyn A. Jones observes that:

> After his death Kennedy was remembered as a fearless champion of racial equality. But he was slow to take a strong stand on the issue. When he became president he was unwilling to propose a civil-rights bill, or even to support one drafted by Congressional liberals, for fear of jeopardising other New Frontier measures. Executive action, he believed, could do more for blacks than legislation.
>
> (Jones, 1995 p.548)

Kennedy did make some outstanding appointments of black officials to high office. Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP's foremost lawyer, became a US Circuit Court Judge. Robert Warren was made head of the Housing and Home Finance Agency. More dramatically, Kennedy sent troops to Mississippi in 1962 to enforce the admission of a black student to the state university. The Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, extended African American voting rights and reduced segregation in schools and public amenities. However, even those historians most favourably inclined towards Kennedy have conceded that the President displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the civil rights issue when he first entered the White House. Arthur M. Schlesinger contended that Kennedy believed that an all-out drive to support civil rights would have simply alienated Southern support for other New Frontier measures such as a minimum wage increase and further support for educational projects. Schlesinger argued that black leaders 'never doubted that Kennedy was on their side' (Schlesinger, 1965 p.793). Subsequent interpretations have been more critical, drawing attention to Kennedy's appointment of segregationist judges in the South and to his approval of the FBI's wiretapping of Martin Luther King, Jr.

However, the young President had an exceptional capacity for personal growth. Some experts have discerned a turning point when Kennedy witnessed on national television the dramatic events unfolding in Birmingham, Alabama, in April–May 1963, as local police commissioner Eugene 'Bull' Connor unleashed dogs, high-pressure fire hoses and baton-wielding policemen on civil rights marchers including large numbers of children. An Associated Press photographer captured the image of a large German shepherd dog mauling a fifteen-year-old bystander. When the picture appeared on the front of *The New York Times*, Kennedy privately remarked that he 'felt sick'. Within a month Kennedy gave a national television address from the Oval Office on the issue of civil rights:

> We are confronted primarily with a moral issue … It is time to act in the Congress … I am therefore asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants, theatres, retail stores and similar establishments.
>
> (JFK presidential library)

Bruce Miroff claims Kennedy did not commit to civil rights as a moral issue until the summer of 1963, and points out that even in the last few months of his life he continued to see civil rights as 'an intrusion rather than a priority'. Thomas C. Reeves felt that Kennedy's domestic programmes floundered because of 'his lack of conviction and personal fervor'. More sympathetic historians have balanced their approach by stressing the narrowness of Kennedy's electoral mandate, the ideological opposition of the Southern Democrats and the partisan approach of the Republicans. It is worth noting that following Kennedy's commitment to civil rights in the summer of 1963 his support in Congress visibly diminished. Alonzo Hamby (1985) has presented Kennedy in a more favourable light, arguing that he made an impressive commitment to civil rights for moral rather than political reasons. Although as late as the spring of 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr felt that the President had accepted 'token' measures, the massive demonstrations in the summer of 1963 prompted Kennedy to lend full executive support to a broad-ranging Civil Rights Bill (White, 1998 p.226–9).

(c) Women in the 1960s

As American women entered the decade that would be ushered in by Kennedy's New Frontier and ended with a **man** landing on the moon, prospects for female equality appeared bleak. The affluent society of the 1950s may have provided middle-class prosperity but it certainly laid few foundations for the women's liberation movement. With its emphasis on building the perfect home and its stifling conformity, the pressures on women to maintain their traditional role were profound. The fabled middle-class American household was crammed with household gadgets but it seemed to many that the role of the archetypal American housewife was to keep the perfect nest clean and tidy, prepare the evening meal and await the return of the male breadwinner. In 1958 only one in three college students were female.

The Civil Rights campaign of the 1950s–1960s acted as a catalyst to the women's liberation movement. As the long-standing obstacles to black equality began to tumble, it became plain to some women that a similar process needed to take place in the liberation of women. Spurred on by Betty Friedan's pioneering work, women gained confidence and became more radical in their protests, staging high-profile disruption of anachronistic events such as beauty pageants and marching into male-dominated bars and restaurants. Their actions helped to rapidly change perceptions of the role of women and stimulated a raft of federal and state-led equal-opportunity legislation. Barriers to women were falling and there was a notable increase in the early 1960s to hitherto almost exclusively male occupations such as for carpenters and electricians. Accountancy now attracted four times as many new female entrants compared to men. Nevertheless, women were still largely excluded from management and executive roles, and the pay gap between men and women actually widened during the 1970s.

Meanwhile, in January 1961 Kennedy told Congress that he needed to be candid about the country's economic well-being: 'The present state of our economy is disturbing. We take office in the wake of 7 months of recession, three and one-half years of slack, seven years of diminished economic growth, and nine years of falling farm income … Our recovery from the 1958 recession, moreover, was anaemic and incomplete' (jfklibrary.org). Dallek notes that 'Kennedy's two greatest economic worries between September 1961 and June 1962 were the country's balance of payment problems, which reduced the strength of the dollar, and inflation' (Dallek, 2003 p.481). However, a sharp slide on the US stock market during the summer of 1962 added to the president's unease, given the imminent mid-term elections due later that year. It could also be argued that the president was more suited to diagnosing problems than providing practical solutions (Dallek, 2003 p.496).

With an eye on the 1964 election Kennedy was desperate to achieve economic growth. In his State of the Union address of 1963 he addressed some of the central economic issues facing the nation:

> At home, the recession is behind us. Well over a million more men and women are working today than were working 2 years ago. The average factory workweek is once again more than 40 hours; our industries are turning out more goods than ever before; and more than half of the manufacturing capacity that lay silent and wasted 100 weeks ago is humming with activity.
>
> (jfklibrary.org)

Kennedy now proposed a fairly radical tax cut even though general trends in employment and economic growth were healthy. His bill aimed to reduce the highest marginal rate from 91 to 70 per cent and the lowest tax rate from 20 to 14 per cent. These plans were relatively easy to present as a 'gamble' and in the autumn of 1963 his bill was becalmed in the House Ways and Means Committee thanks to resistance from Southern Democrats. A pattern was emerging in which the president became progressively bolder in his proposals during 1963 while opposition to his ideas remained steadfast.

(d) The space race

Kennedy was reluctant to see the Soviet Union steal a march on the United States in the way that it had done with its successful Sputnik mission of 1957 but financial realities meant that Kennedy was unable to support all aspects of the space programme. For example, in 1961, the President was able to support additional finance for the Saturn rocket programme but drew back from supporting the Apollo programme and manned space flight beyond Mercury. The climate changed dramatically when in April 1961 the Soviet spacecraft Vostok 1 took Yuri Gagarin into space. Kennedy was acutely aware of the political implications of falling behind the Soviets. In Congress in May 1961, he stated:

> 'First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult to accomplish' (Logsdon, 2010 p.114). Ultimately, Kennedy managed to persuade Congress to sanction a massive increase in the funding of the Apollo space programme. In terms of defining the scope of the New Frontier Kennedy ranked these initiatives as 'among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency in the Office of the Presidency.'
>
> (Logsdon, 2010 p.3)

(e) Problems with Congress

At first glance, it might appear that Kennedy had a simple task in dealing with the eighty-seventh Congress which convened its two-year session at the start of 1961. In the Senate, the Democrats enjoyed a majority of sixty-four seats over the thirty-six of the Republicans. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats held a majority of 263 to 174. However, the reality was less simple. A large bloc of conservative Southern Democrats in the 'Solid South' consistently opposed Kennedy's 'liberal' proposals and voted instead with the Republican Party. In July 1962 the administration's proposals for

medical insurance were defeated in the Senate by fifty-two votes to forty-eight. This meant that even in the autumn of 1963 some of Kennedy's most important legislation was stalled in the Congress. For example, in September 1963, the civil rights bill was mired in the House Judiciary Committee. A further factor making life difficult for Kennedy may have been the gloomy demeanour of someone who was much more adept at managing the white water of the Senate – his now vice-president L. B. Johnson. As one insider noted, 'LBJ's simple presence seems to bug him' (Clarke, 2013 p.139).

Thomas C. Reeves is dismissive of Kennedy's handling of Congress:

> 'As a legislative leader, Kennedy was relatively ineffective. Weak support in Congress was part of the problem. The President's lack of conviction and personal fervor for what he was advocating was partly responsible. His reluctant approach to civil rights, until quite late in his Thousand Days, is a case in point.'
>
> (Reeves, 1992 p.416)

Mark J. White presents a valuable comparison with the domestic achievements of Eisenhower and Johnson:

> Next to the preceding Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Kennedy's domestic policies seem impressive … More than Eisenhower, JFK sought to address the problems facing Americans, whether in education or housing or civil rights … Compared with his successor in the White House, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Kennedy's record appears in a different light. In this case, his diplomacy appears more impressive, his domestic policies less so.
>
> (White, 1998 p.10)

Julian E. Zelizer's presents a clear contrast between the legislative achievements of JFK and LBJ:

> Lyndon Johnson hated being vice president. He was at heart a legislator who had been relegated to the side-lines of legislation. For almost three years he had watched John F. Kennedy fumble most of the big domestic issues of the day, either because the president was unwilling to take on the toughest challenges of the moment, or because he was too afraid of the political fallout, or because he knew he lacked the ability to win the legislative battles he faced on Capitol Hill. At the time of Kennedy's death, most of his major domestic initiatives – including civil rights, a tax cut, federal assistance for education, and hospital insurance for the elderly – were stalled in Congress or had not yet been introduced there.
>
> (Zelizer, 2015 p.1–4)

22.7 LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON

Johnson was born in 1908 in the notoriously harsh setting of the Texas Hill Country. His experience as a young teacher left him with a visceral hatred of poverty. He entered Congress in 1937 aged twenty-eight and went on to develop an extensive network of contacts on Capitol Hill. In 1955 he became the majority leader in the Senate but was dismayed when the Democratic Party selected Kennedy as their presidential candidate in 1960. He found his three years as Kennedy's vice president intensely frustrating, as Kennedy's 'New Frontier' legislation stalled in Congress. The trauma of the Kennedy assassination in 1963 meant that no President could have assumed the highest office under

more trying circumstances. Johnson understood that the mood of national guilt which followed Kennedy's murder presented a unique 'window of opportunity' when blocked legislation could now be freed up and guided through the legislative process. The scale of his ambition was staggering. As Zelizer puts it, he 'was determined to push through a transformative body of laws that would constitute nothing less than a Second New Deal' (Zelizer, 2015 p.2).

(a) The election of 1964 and the launch of the Great Society

Johnson's legislative success meant that he was nominated unanimously. The Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater's campaign rested on anti-communism, and condemnation of the Great Society's cost and its principle of 'big government'. The Democrats successfully 'defined' their opponent as an extremist and the electorate responded in November 1964 with a massive endorsement of Johnson's position. Goldwater secured only six states of which five were in the Deep South. Johnson's landslide victory extended to the Congress.

Johnson launched the concept of a Great Society in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan in May 1964:

> The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning.

A buoyant Johnson returned to Washington 'intoxicated' by the welcome that he felt his ideas had received.

His enthusiasm for legislation was boundless. As Schulman puts it: 'No president matched Johnson's skills as chief legislator. When the "Great 89th", the Congress which LBJ swept into office with its 1964 landslide, completed its work in the autumn of 1966, it left behind the most productive law-making record in American history' (Schulman, 1995 p.91). His Great Society legislation also established the National Endowments for the Arts, initiatives in Mental Health Research and Narcotics Rehabilitation. The Appalachian Development Act signalled an unprecedented level of investment in a historically poor region. The Water Quality Act established national standards on water.

Robert Dallek believes that

> 'Johnson's highest Great Society priority was to broaden educational opportunities and enrich the quality of school offerings. He had an almost mystical faith in the capacity of education to transform people's lives and improve their standard of living. He shared with earlier generations of Americans an evangelical faith in educational opportunity as a public good. "He was a nut on education," Hubert Humphrey said. "He felt that education was the greatest thing he could give to the people; he just believed in it, just like some people believe in miracle cures."'
>
> (Dallek, 1998 p.95–6)

In January 1964 the president called education 'the number one business on this Nation's agenda' (Dallek, 1998 196–7). He set out a vision for a national goal of Full Educational Opportunity and asked Congress to double educational spending to $8 billion. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act aimed to provide 1 billion dollars in compensatory education funding for the poorest students. Johnson's skill in piloting such a controversial and costly bill through the Congress was masterly. As Dallek relates it: 'in only eighty-seven days the Congress had passed a billion-dollar law, deeply affecting a fundamental institution of the nation' (Dallek, 1998 p.200).

(b) Poverty, medicare and medicaid

Johnson believed federal action against poverty was a sound investment. Money spent on helping the young unemployed was a 'hand up' rather than a 'hand out'. The Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) called for the establishment of a Job Corps, and study programmes to provide young people with education and vocational skills. It proposed a Community Action Program to encourage local planning to fight poverty, and the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity to coordinate the war on poverty.

(c) The Medicare Act (1965)

The relative prosperity of the Eisenhower years had not necessarily created a healthy nation and like all advanced countries, a longer life span meant diseases of the elderly were hugely problematic and expensive. Johnson's personal awareness of this was heightened by the shock of his own heart attack, at the age of forty-six. Full of energy at the start of his first term, he asked the Congress to make 'the wonders of modern medicine' available to all Americans. The president 'urged hospital insurance for the aged, more modern hospitals, increased and better medical manpower, and greater spending on mental health'. He demanded the creation of a Commission on Heart Disease, Cancer and Strokes (HDCS) given that 'two-thirds of all Americans now living will ultimately suffer or die from one of them' (Dallek, 1998 p.204). A general improvement in the standard of living and steady advances in medical knowledge produced a rapid rise in the number of Americans reaching old age. The cost of providing medical care to this group was immense. Johnson wanted to provide medical-insurance benefits for the elderly through the social security system. Although Johnson claimed that his Bill would provide 'care for the sick and serenity for the fearful' it did not provide the kind of comprehensive medical insurance that he would have liked. Importantly, Dallek notes 'staggering increases in medical costs to the entire society. Where total Medicare expenditures were $3.5 billion in the first year of the program, they had risen to $144 billion by 1993' (Dallek, 1998 p.211).

(d) The Medicaid Act

The Medicaid Act aimed to provide for the poor in the same way that the Medicare Act sought to provide for the elderly. Some historians have claimed that this Act was less significant than advocates of the Great Society have claimed, because poor people were already catered for by an extensive system of charity medicine. Allen J. Matusow provides this critique of Medicaid:

> It's quite often implied by people who talk about Medicaid that in the old days if you didn't have money, you didn't have access to medical services. That is not true. There was an extensive system of charity medicine before Medicaid was passed … Poor people saw doctors on an average of 4.3 times a year compared to 5.1 times for more affluent classes. This doesn't mean that access was not a problem. There were pockets of poor people in America that did not have access to medical treatment. But if you were the average poor person, you had access to a fairly well-developed charity medical system.
>
> (Schulman, 1995 p.187)

Dallek concludes that 'The benefits to the elderly and the indigent from Medicare and Medicaid are indisputable. But they did not solve the problem of care at reasonable

cost for all Americans. Johnson's reforms were only a partial and imperfect solution to a dilemma that other industrialized societies had addressed more successfully'. (Dallek, 1998 p.211)

(e) Civil rights

Bruce Schulman provides this analysis of the transition from the Kennedy Administration to the Johnson era:

> Of all the holdover measures from the Kennedy administration, LBJ devoted the greatest effort to civil rights. In the wake of Kennedy's death, a number of civil rights leaders feared that LBJ, the master of Senate compromise, would dilute the bill as he had the Civil Rights Act of 1957. But LBJ quickly assured the nation that he would accept no compromises this time around.
>
> (Schulman, 1995 p.73)

The Civil Rights Act of July 1964 stands out as a landmark moment in the history of the struggle against racism. In its own words the act enforced 'the constitutional right to vote … to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations … to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education' and 'to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs'. Henceforth, the law, in theory at least, would outlaw discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, religion, gender or national origin. But within Congress the hostility of Southern Democrats towards civil rights legislation was well known. It is frequently said that it is in the committees that the real work of Congress is done. In the early 1960s conservative southern Democrats held the chair in almost half of the major committees in the House and Senate, including the House Ways and Means Committee with its fiscal responsibilities and crucially, the House Rules Committee, which controlled the schedule and rules for debate on the floor. But it was in the Senate that the battle lines were drawn, and it seemed likely that the technique of 'filibustering' would be used to mire the Bill in unlimited debate. While these practices might almost sound quaint, the stark fact was that between the end of the Reconstruction era and 1956 not a single civil rights bill had been able to overcome the committee system or the filibuster tactic. The way to overcome the filibuster was to 'invoke cloture', which required sixty-seven of the 100 Senators to agree to terminate the debate. This device for bringing the interminable talking to an end was introduced by senators for the first time in 1917. However, sixty-seven votes represented a huge barrier to anyone presenting any type of 'liberal' bill and most of all, to civil rights legislation. In the past, the Senate had never voted for cloture where civil rights legislation was concerned. When the Bill finally came to the floor of the Senate, in March 1964, the segregationists reverted to the filibuster. While the opponents of the bill spoke for day after day of the dire threat to the constitution, in constituencies across the country senators who remained on the fence faced mounting pressure to support the vote for cloture. the longest filibuster in the history of the Senate finally came to an end in June 1964. In the end, the vote for cloture was seventy-one to twenty-nine. The Civil Rights Act became law in 1964: segregation of public amenities in the South became illegal. This was Johnson's finest hour.

(f) 'The Freedom Summer' 1964

The gradual stirring of legislation in the Congress was not enough to satisfy the burgeoning momentum of the civil rights movement. In the summer of 1964 in the state of Mississippi,

the target of this protest was the denial of African-American voting rights and more specifically, corruption among the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party. Ultimately, as the protest unfolded, the combined efforts of the SNCC, local people and King exerted pressure on the city of Selma over black voter registration. The pinch-point of the protest came to be the Edmund Pettus Bridge, where a peaceful march came under attack from law-enforcement officers armed with billy-clubs and tear gas. The images of brutality elicited widespread sympathy, presidential outrage and the mobilization of thousands of white supporters who headed to the city to take part in the Selma-Montgomery march.

(g) The Voting Rights Act (1965)

Despite the success of the Civil Rights Act and Goldwater's calamitous defeat in the presidential election, Johnson had to be pushed by Martin Luther King Jr. to prioritize voter registration over education and health-care legislation. Meanwhile, King's focus had switched to Selma, Alabama, a city notorious for its commitment to segregation. Predictably, Selma's police responded to unarmed protestors with unrestrained brutality. Television coverage of 'Bloody Sunday' shocked the nation. President Johnson signalled his determination to take back the initiative with his dramatic appearance before a joint session of the Congress on 15 March 1965:

> There is no Southern problem … There is only an American problem … I will send to Congress a law designed to eliminate illegal barriers to the right to vote. This bill will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections – Federal, State and local. It is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome … The time of justice has now come.
>
> (Dallek, 1998 p.218–19)

Opponents of civil rights legislation who had seemed so powerful in 1964 now seemed relatively impotent. The passage of the Voting Rights Act in August 1965 amid a whirlwind of Great Society legislation marked a major step forward in civil rights legislation. Further progress came with the Twenty-Fourth Amendment to the Constitution (1964) which outlawed poll taxes: A substantial increase in African American voting now followed in the South.

(h) The Black Power movement

In August 1965, just days after Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, a serious riot erupted in the Watts district of Los Angeles after repeated allegations of police brutality. A further police arrest in the ghetto sparked six days of rioting. This resulted in thirty-four deaths, at least a 1,000 injuries. Many broadly sympathetic white people were shocked and frightened by the violence shown on TV and were mystified as to why black people would cause so much damage to their own neighbourhood. The successful legislation of 1964 and 1965 had raised expectations among the African community but as the focus shifted to the inner-city, it became plain to many that in one sense, nothing had really changed. Poverty, poor housing and residential discrimination remained to blight the lives of many ordinary people. While the focus of many black activists turned to matters such as housing, the white community demanded a sharper focus on the enforcement of law and order in the American city. By the middle of the 1960s it was becoming evident, not least to King himself, that not all black Americans agreed with his leadership. Many young black people in an urban setting were attracted to a new, militant brand of leaders who were committed

to the notion of Black Nationalism. King's leadership now appeared conservative and conciliatory. The Black Muslims rejected Christianity for Islam and claimed that all white people were devils. In the summer of 1966, under the radical leadership of Stokely Carmichael, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) dropped the word 'nonviolent' from its name, signalling a more aggressive approach than its predecessor. His focus on 'black power' unsettled many Americans who had previously been sympathetic to the civil rights movement. This anxiety was exacerbated in 1967, when racial tension flared in over a hundred cities in a disturbing summer of discontent.

(i) 1967 – Presidential Commission of Inquiry

Johnson responded by setting up a Commission of Enquiry, which concluded in 1968 that the root cause of the racial tension was 'pervasive discrimination and segregation in employment, education and housing'. However, the tide of events in the country at large was no longer flowing in the direction of further legislative measures for African Americans. The war in Vietnam had drained Johnson's energy and the nation's finances. White sympathy for civil rights ebbed away in the face of nationally televised images of looting and violence. Meanwhile, the Black Panther movement, with its paramilitary style came to national attention, under its charismatic 'minister of information', Eldridge Cleaver. The Black Panthers were confrontational towards white authority, famously using the medals ceremony in the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games to raise a black-gloved salute during the playing of the Star-Spangled Banner. More than any one, it was Malcolm X who was most able to articulate the anger of so many black people at this time.

(j) Malcolm X

Malcolm Little was born in 1925 in Omaha, Nebraska. His parents were violent and dysfunctional. One of Malcolm's earliest childhood memories was of his paternal uncle being lynched. Malcolm's father, a full-blooded, hot-headed preacher was a 'dedicated organizer' for Marcus Garvey and his 'back to Africa' movement. His outspoken views may have provoked an attack by Klansmen, resulting in the Little family being driven out of town, but the details of this incident remain unclear. When Malcolm was just six years old his father was killed, either at the hands of a white supremacist group, as the family maintained, or in an accident as ruled by the police and the coroner. By now, the young man's sense of anger at the cards he had been dealt was complete. A series of increasingly serious crimes meant that at the age of just twenty he was given a seven-year prison sentence. He became a prolific reader and converted to the Nation of Islam. Upon release in 1952, he met with Elijah Muhammad who enlisted him as a member of the Nation and replaced the name Little with the surname X. Moving to Harlem, he proved to be a powerful, instinctive and charismatic speaker. He preached the orthodox Black Muslim doctrine to an increasingly sizeable congregation, largely young black people from the poor ghettos. Malcolm's message regarding King was scathing: 'The goal of Dr. Martin Luther King is to give Negroes a chance to sit in a segregated restaurant besides the same white man who has brutalized them for 400 years' (Dierenfield and White, 2012 p.175). In turn, Malcolm was becoming increasingly frustrated with what he was coming to see as the conservatism of his mentor Elijah Muhammad.

It was no surprise when Malcolm X broke from the Nation of Islam but the bitterness of the spilt caused Malcolm to predict that it would only be a matter of time before he was killed as a result. Meanwhile, in New York City Malcolm founded a new direct-action

group called the Muslim Mosque Inc. This advocated black participation in political, economic and social programmes while condemning King's tactics of non-violence. In 1964 he formed the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). The political platform of his new group has been seen by some scholars as predating the beliefs of the Black Power movement which began in 1966. Malcolm's unique brand of agitation, black-nationalism and commitment to the spiritual and economic elevation of African Americans was a fire which remained undimmed, even though he was roundly condemned by the white press. Malcolm had predicted that he would be murdered and in February 1965, while speaking in Harlem, he was brutally gunned down by three members of the Nation of Islam. Meanwhile, between 1965 and his tragic death in April 1968, King's relationship with President Johnson gradually deteriorated. Johnson's commitment to escalating the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam made it difficult for the two leaders to remain on good terms. In the words of King himself America was sending blacks to 'guarantee liberties in South East Asia which they had not found themselves in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem' (Jones, 1995 p.554).

In the last months of his life in 1968, King broadened his attention to issues of economic justice and the damaging war in Vietnam. King's focus was shifting from the battle against segregation in the south to the national issue of economic inequality. Given the commitment expended by Johnson on all aspects of the Great Society, the President expected to feel a sense of gratitude from his people in return. However, his approval ratings were gradually falling as he paid the price for the urban riots that frightened so many of his erstwhile supporters. If scenes of rioting at home were disturbing, then the images that began to appear night-after-night from Vietnam were even more damaging. In his State of the Union address of January 1966, Johnson declared:

> Our Nation tonight is engaged in a brutal and bitter conflict in Vietnam … But we will not permit those who fire upon us in Vietnam to win a victory over the desires and the intentions of all the American people. This Nation is mighty enough, its society is healthy enough, its people are strong enough, to pursue our goals in the rest of the world while still bringing a Great Society here at home.
>
> (Schulman, 1995 p.234)

But the momentum of the Great Society was ebbing away. The escalation of the Vietnam War in 1967–8 would ensure that.

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Chapter

23 USA 1968–2012: Opportunity and challenge

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The period 1968–2012 was marked by dramatic twists and turns in the fortunes of the presidency and the well-being and self-confidence of the United States itself. For a time, the power amassed by Nixon (1969–74) in the White House after his victory in November 1968 led to observers using the term 'the imperial presidency'. It seemed that the power of the president had reached unparalleled new heights. On the other hand, the second term of the Nixon administration was marked by the trauma of the Watergate scandal which significantly weakened the authority of the highest office. In the wake of Nixon's painful resignation in August 1974, Presidents Ford (1974–7) and Carter (1977–81) presided over periods when the prestige of the United States, both at home and abroad appeared to be diminished. At times during the 1980s and 1990s, under Reagan (1981–9) and Clinton (1993–2001), two leaders with markedly different ideologies presided over periods of economic well-being and confident political leadership that seemed to suggest a bright future for the American people. In these two instances popular presidents were able to secure second terms, generally an indicator that things had gone well. But popularity can be a fleeting sensation for the incumbent in the Oval Office and Reagan and Clinton were dogged by scandal in their second terms. It should also be emphasized that the problems of racial inequality and poverty remained monumentally difficult to resolve for leaders on both sides of the political spectrum.

The conduct of foreign policy also played a major role in the success or failure of the American Presidents who served between 1968 and 2012. In the case of Nixon, the Vietnam War proved hugely damaging. Peace was eventually secured in 1973 but at a heavy price not just in terms of American casualties and loss of esteem but also at a terrible cost to the people of Vietnam. Subsequently, Presidents including Carter, Reagan and Clinton all discovered that intervention in the affairs of faraway nations carried great risks. When troops were lost, the associated trauma had a devastating impact on the American people. President George H. W. Bush (1989–93) trod a different path in that when he launched a short-lived but successful surgical campaign to repel Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, his popularity soared to record levels. However, a salutary reminder of the overriding importance of the domestic economy came when Bush faced a sharp recession before the presidential campaign of 1992. This meant that Bush's popularity collapsed leading to victory for the little-known governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton. While Clinton may have managed the American economy relatively successfully, his notorious affair with Monica Lewinsky provided a further damaging setback to the image of the American president, with an unedifying process of impeachment in the later stages of his second term. This also underlined the increasing polarization of the two mainstream parties and a breakdown of the process of bi-partisan agreement. A remarkably close election contest in 2000 between George W. Bush and Al Gore was eventually only settled with the intervention of the Supreme Court. The whole episode undermined public confidence in

the election process and increased further the tensions between the Republicans and the Democrats. As America entered the twenty-first century, power once again rested in the hands of the Bush dynasty. But in September 2000, in the early days of the presidency of George W. Bush (2001–9) the United States was shaken to its core by a devastating terrorist attack on New York City and Washington, DC. Bush's response, the 'War on Terror', led to campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq which may have achieved some initial 'successes' but which were ultimately costly, traumatic and difficult to conclude. Bush's second term was marked by further calamitous events. Bush was heavily criticized for his ineffective response to the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina (2005) and then faced the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression in the autumn of 2008. This paved the way for a landmark election victory for Barack Obama (2009–17), the first African-American to be elected President.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

There was probably no man who desired the power of the presidency more avidly than Richard Nixon and yet who experienced so much trauma when he finally reached the White House. The thirty-seventh President was prepared to abuse power, sanction criminality and encouraged others in the obstruction of justice. An 'imperial presidency' emerged, with immense power concentrated in the hands of the chief executive and his closest aides. Nixon's ability and work ethic are not in doubt. By his early forties he had been elected to the House, the Senate and twice to the Vice Presidency of the United States. But his obsessive nature brought a darker side to the Presidency than any of his predecessors. His simmering rage against his enemies led him to sanction illegal wiretapping, break-ins and cover-ups.

Born in the small town of Yorba Linda, California, in 1913, three factors were instrumental in Nixon's rapid rise. The first was the war. Military service was everything to Nixon's fledgling career. The second was the Cold War. Nixon exploited the mood of McCarthyism to define his opponents and to further himself. Finally, it was the sensational trial of Alger Hiss which brought Nixon to national attention. Hiss, an Ivy League-educated diplomat, had been part of Roosevelt's personal delegation at the crucial Yalta conference of February 1945. When he was accused in 1948 of passing sensitive material to the Russians, the nation was transfixed. Nixon's desperation to secure a guilty verdict divided opinion. To some he was tenacious and deeply patriotic, while to the liberal left, Nixon was an unprincipled, even malicious demagogue, 'Tricky Dick'.

23.2 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS 1952–72

(a) The vice-presidential campaign of 1952

As Christopher Matthews puts it: 'During the early years, Nixon was the man to beat. He was the best politician of his time, articulating more ably than anyone else the nervous mood of post-World War II America. By the age of forty-three, he had been elected to the House, the Senate, and twice to the vice presidency of the United States' (Matthews, 1996 p.15). Against the backdrop of Korea and McCarthyism, the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket looked ready to cruise to victory. But Nixon had already alienated many observers and made plenty of enemies. From Nixon's perspective, those enemies coalesced around the East Coast establishment, the Ivy League universities and the liberal press. Despite this, the pair swept to an emphatic victory winning all bar nine states. For Nixon, it would mean two terms as Vice President, gaining vital experience for what was to come.

(b) 1960–4

Nixon looked back at his narrow defeat of 1960 almost in awe of the 'dirty tricks' the Kennedy campaign had used against him. Before long he had his sights on California's gubernatorial election of 1962. California was a hugely important prize. Nixon had carried California in the 1960 presidential race, so it seemed an eminently winnable seat. He was therefore devastated when an increasingly bitter campaign ended in his second defeat in two years. In 1964 the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater was heavily beaten in LBJ's landslide victory. Goldwater was an extreme candidate and his positions on foreign policy and the atomic bomb were badly exposed during a poor campaign. The stage was set for a relatively more moderate candidate to lead the Republicans back from the political wilderness. That man, remarkably, was Richard Nixon.

(c) The presidential election of 1968

Facing an onslaught of criticism over Vietnam, President Johnson announced, in March 1968 that he would not stand for re-election. For the Republicans, Nixon selected Spiro Agnew as his running mate. George Wallace, the Governor of Alabama, ran on a pro-segregation ticket, in the name of the American Independent Party. For the Democrats, Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy fought out a tight contest which reached its conclusion when Kennedy achieved a narrow victory in the California primary of June 1968. Yet on the same day, an Arab nationalist, Sirhan Sirhan, gunned down Kennedy. James T. Patterson observes, 'The death of Robert Kennedy further smashed the already beleaguered forces of American liberalism and devastated people who had looked to him as the only remaining hope to heal a fragmented nation' (Patterson, 1996 p.693). McCarthy failed to build support in the wake of Kennedy's death and the initiative passed to Johnson's Vice President and the approved candidate of the party hierarchy, Hubert Humphrey. The result was extremely close, with both candidates achieving more than 31 million in the popular vote. The Electoral College gave Nixon a margin of 301 to Humphrey's 191. Fatally, the narrow victory meant that Nixon would stop at nothing to secure a second term.

(d) The Nixon administration and the end of the Great Society

Nixon entered the White House opposed to drug abuse and sexual permissiveness, and placing an onus on law and order and American values. He rejected 'big-government' and the Great Society. The ongoing war in Vietnam, inflation, overseas competition and rising unemployment, meant that American society now faced profound adjustments. The middle-class resented the big-spending programmes of the Democratic Party. Nixon advocated a return to 'self-help' and 'local control', dismantling Johnson's social welfare programmes and vetoing liberal initiatives in areas such as health and education. The residual cost of the Great Society and increasingly dynamic competition from overseas meant that Nixon found it difficult to restore prosperity. He entered the election year of 1972 with a 'dismal economic record which included the doubling of unemployment' (Jones, 1995 p.561).

(e) The presidential election of 1972

Despite his economic worries, Nixon was confident that the public mood was not ready to return to the Democrats. When George Wallace, the right-winger who was probably

the Democratic Party's most effective campaigner, was shot and paralysed during the campaign, the door opened to George S. McGovern, who was very much on the liberal wing of the party. McGovern's proposals on tax and welfare failed to strike a chord with the public mood. His ill-judged comment that he would 'crawl to Hanoi' to secure peace in Vietnam cost him further support. The Nixon–Agnew ticket won, with more than 60 per cent of the popular vote, 520 votes in the Electoral College and forty-nine states.

23.3 WATERGATE AND ITS AFTERMATH

The triumph of the second election victory would turn out to be short-lived. Although Nixon found peace in Vietnam, it was not achieved without further suffering in the period between his re-election and the signing of the cease-fire in January 1973. In fact, the Christmas campaign of 1972 saw the Vietnamese exposed to a level of bombing which was unprecedented in its severity. Even this was overshadowed, however, by the scandal which became known as Watergate.

Having lost by the narrowest of margins to Kennedy in 1960 and having defeated Humphrey by a hair's breadth in 1968, Nixon became increasingly obsessed with holding on to Presidential power. He was determined that nothing should be left to chance in the run-up to the election in 1972. With this objective in mind, Nixon's former Attorney General John Mitchell organized the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP). Bugging, entrapment, and the driving need to 'get' his opponents moved the administration from questionable methods to sheer criminality. Meanwhile, in 1971 the leak of the 'Pentagon Papers' to the press – a large amount of explosive material relating to the conduct of the Vietnam War – prompted the White House to create the Special Investigative Unit, which became known as the 'Plumbers'. This unit was briefed to 'stop security leaks and to investigate other security matters' (Kutler, 1997 p.7).

(a) Watergate – the break-in 1972

During May–June 1972, repeated attempts were made by a small group of men working for CREEP to break into the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, DC. The episode which would ultimately undo the President's power, and see his closest advisers sent to jail, began on an almost comic note with a number of botched attempts to get into the building. On the night of 17 June, the police apprehended the burglars; they were indicted for burglary and illegal bugging. The White House Press Secretary Ron Zeigler tried to minimize the event as a 'third-rate burglary'. Nixon emphatically denied any White House involvement in the Watergate incident.

A combination of intrepid investigative reporting by the *Washington Post*, the determination of trial judge John J. Sirica to get to the truth and the decision of one of the burglars to come clean, ultimately exposed a much more serious crime. The probings of a Senate investigative committee revealed that senior White House staff, including the President's Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and his domestic adviser John Ehrlichman, knew about the break-in and took part in the cover-up. The various lines of enquiry in the press and in Congress also revealed for the first time the existence of hours of taped conversations from the Oval Office. Public support, already draining from the President, dwindled further in October 1973 when Nixon dismissed Archibald Cox, the Special Prosecutor who had been appointed by the Attorney General to unravel the whole affair, after he had attempted to subpoena the tapes. In April 1974 a reluctant President finally handed over edited transcripts; the tapes exposed the unattractive side of the President's character to public view, a crude, foul-mouthed, deceitful man.

In July, the Supreme Court ordered the President to hand over all relevant tapes. Then the House Judiciary Committee recommended three charges of impeachment, based on obstruction of justice, abuse of power and refusal to comply with the Committee's subpoenas. On 5 August the President complied with the Supreme Court's order in *United States* v. *Nixon*, and released transcripts of the 'smoking gun' conversations of 23 June 1972. This showed the President, just six days after the break-in, discussing with Haldeman the possibility of using the CIA to thwart the FBI's investigation. Any last vestige of support for the President had now disintegrated. On 9 August 1974, with impeachment charges looming, Nixon became the first man to resign the Presidency.

(b) President Ford

The new president was sworn in, in the most trying of circumstances. Gerald Ford, a staunchly conservative, Republican Congressman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, became the first man to serve as Vice President and then President, without facing the electorate. An unassuming man, Ford had worked closely with Nixon since the 1940s and placed loyalty to Nixon at a premium. He now wanted to balance the books and reduce government intervention in the economy and in the wider society. Within a month of his appointment, Ford faced his first major controversy and one from which he never really recovered. In September 1974, he announced that he had decided to grant Nixon a 'full, free and absolute pardon … for all offenses against the United States which he (Richard Nixon) has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period of his five and a half years as president' (Werth, 2006 p.321). While Ford justified his decision as an act of healing, the public reaction was largely unfavourable. Evidence that the electorate were deeply disenchanted with their elected representatives came in the mid-term elections of November 1974. Republican seats in the House of Representatives fell to their lowest level in almost forty years. Beyond the presidential pardon, Ford was able to find precious little room for manoeuvre in managing the economy. Tension in the Middle East erupted into full blown war in October 1973. Consequently, the oil-exporting Arab states sharply increased their prices and placed an embargo on Israel's allies, most notably the United States. Through the winter of 1973–4 prices at the petrol pumps rose by 50 per cent. Facing rising unemployment and economic stagnation in the spring of 1975, Ford had little choice but to jettison his principles as he tried to stimulate growth with a major tax cut which produced only limited results. For the rest of his time in office, Ford established a reputation for his prolific user of the veto, obstructing job creation and social welfare legislation.

23.4 THE CARTER PRESIDENCY

(a) The election of 1976

As the primary campaign season began, Gerald Ford surprised many observers by announcing that he would go beyond the caretaker role which many people had assumed was his limit. Jimmy Carter, the former Governor of Georgia, emerged from a competitive field as the chosen candidate. Carter went against the trend of Southern Democrats with his reputation for a liberal approach towards the race issue, and had the distinct advantage of being patently honest. He was obviously sincere, but under the glare of the national news media, doubts were raised about his ability to fulfil the role of President. After a low-key campaign, Carter emerged with a narrow victory in November 1976, with almost unanimous support among African American voters. Carter's humility signalled a move

away from the 'imperial presidency' but in the White House he came up short. In Jones's words he was; 'Seemingly ill at ease with the power of the Presidency, he proved incapable of wielding it effectively. He gave the impression of reacting to crises rather than anticipating them and of being unable to foresee the implications of his own actions … He rarely looked or sounded like a President, appearing rather to be naïve, capricious and prone to error' (Jones, 1995 p.568). His proposals on reorganization of the government, wider health care provision and tax reform came to nothing. While his strong faith made him 'personally opposed to abortion' he stressed that he would be guided by the law and would not overturn the landmark Supreme Court judgement of *Roe v. Wade*. This attempt not to alienate feminists was limited by his opposition to federal funding to pay for abortions for women with low income. On the other hand, the powerful and vociferous pro-life movement was furious that President Carter was not prepared to overturn Roe v Wade. Carter's failure to truly commit to either side on the challenging issue of abortion came to illustrate a man who seemed increasingly out of his depth in the Oval Office. Jones offers a damning appraisal that 'Far from providing the "new leadership" he had promised, Carter turned out to be a political tyro and, what was worse, one with only a limited capacity to grow into the job' (Jones, 1985 p.567–8).

The fledgling president now faced an almost perfect storm of economic adversity. The crisis in the Middle East and the resultant fuel crisis, rising unemployment and inflation all combined to make Carter look increasingly ineffective and hard-pressed. Carter initially believed that generous spending was the best way to set the country back on the road to prosperity. As prices rose, he was forced to abandon this approach and take a much more cautious line aimed at tackling the scourge of inflation. As the 1980 election loomed the country faced a budget deficit of $50 billion and rapidly rising unemployment and inflation. The combination of domestic malaise and impotence abroad paved the way for a candidate who could promise Americans a brighter future, Ronald Reagan.

23.5 THE EMERGENCE OF THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The emergence of the Black Power movement forced King to shift position, between the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and his tragic death in April 1968. King's relationship with President Johnson gradually deteriorated from 1965 onwards. Johnson's commitment to escalating the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam made it difficult for the two leaders to remain on good terms. The fact that young black men were making up a disproportionate share of the US military effort meant that in the words of King himself America was sending blacks to 'guarantee liberties in South East Asia which they had not found themselves in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem' (Jones, 1995 p.554). In the months before his brutal murder in April 1968, King brought attention to wider economic justice and the damaging war in Vietnam. King became an advocate for disadvantaged people from the rural poor, to those who lived in the ghetto, from poor white families in the Appalachians to Native Americans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. His focus was shifting from the battle against segregation in the South to the national issue economic equality. As Farrell puts it:

> The civil rights movement, in the late 1960s, had grown more militant and off-putting to many white Americans. The photographs of nonviolent martyrs in Birmingham and Selma – being beaten by state troopers, bitten by police dogs, or tossed by fire hoses as they fought for their rights as citizens – had given way to images of 'black power' advocates like Stokely Carmichael, defiant sports figures like Muhammad Ali, and the gun-toting revolutionaries of the Black Panther Party.

> The movement had shifted its agenda as well. With the fundamental rights of citizenship now legally secured, civil rights leaders like King had pressed for economic benefits and tax-supported social programs, irritating the white working and middle class, who were starting to chafe at rising income and property taxes. In the year before his death, King joined the opposition to the Vietnam War, yet another polarizing issue.
>
> (Farrell, 2017 p.387)

(a) The busing programme

A major issue at this time was 'busing', a key part of the programme to achieve racial desegregation in the North. Under busing schemes, pupils were moved away from traditional neighbourhood schools and taken a distance to schools in other areas to achieve a racial balance. Even before Nixon entered the White House, busing was controversial. In the city of Boston, for example, implementation of busing was accompanied by widespread violence, protests and school closures. When Nixon entered the Oval Office the vast majority of black children in the Deep South were still attending segregated schools. Any momentum to change this came not from the president but from the Supreme Court. The struggle between the Executive Branch and Judicial authority was reflected in the Court's ruling in *Alexander* v. *Holmes* (1969) which went against Nixon's attempts to slow down the process of school desegregation in Mississippi. Despite the president's hostility to the busing programme, in 1971 the Supreme Court ruled in its favour. The decision handed cities and counties the authority to use the busing strategy to end the segregation of their school districts. In a note to senior figures in his administration Nixon commented that 'segregated white education is probably superior to education in which there is too great a degree of integration of inferior black students with the white students.' Nixon's conclusion was that students and teachers from ethnic minorities, 'dragged the others down with them' (Farrell, 2017 p.385).

Nevertheless, Nixon could be the arch pragmatist. Seeing the historic inevitability of school desegregation and at the same time, desperate to avoid a 'Little Rock' style standoff, Nixon dramatically changed course. In the words of Dean Kotlowski, 'A confluence of presidential leadership, federal persuasion, Supreme Court rulings, Justice Department lawsuits and the threat of HEW (Health Research and welfare Department) denying holdout districts federal aid, broke white southern resistance' (Farrell, 2017 p.393). Out of a total school population of 3 million, only 186,000 African American children attended desegregated school in the South prior to 1969. During autumn 1969, after the Nixon administration began to desegregate schools via litigation, 600,000 southern blacks entered desegregated schools and by the end of 1970 'two million more African Americans were attending desegregated schools,' Kotlowski wrote. 'In this sense, Nixon was the greatest school de-segregator in American history' (Farrell, 2017 p.393).

Following Nixon's resignation in 1974, Ford's short spell in the White House as effectively a caretaker president made it unlikely that he would devote any significant attention to the civil rights issue. To be sure, dealing with the immensely toxic fall-out from the Watergate scandal would have preoccupied any politician, particularly one judged by historians as being of relatively limited ability. Ford will always be best remembered for his controversial pardon offered to his disgraced predecessor, Richard Nixon. He also attracted some controversy for offering a partial pardon to those who had been found guilty of dodging the draft during the Vietnam War. Some historians have commented wryly that the leniency offered by the Oval Office at this time was not extended to the judicial system as it applied to ordinary people and in particular, African Americans. Therefore, we can move on briskly from President Ford, and consider the work of his successor, Jimmy Carter a politician from the South. Whereas previous prominent politicians from the Deep

South had fanned the flames of racial bigotry, Carter, a Southern Baptist, spoke during the presidential campaign of reconciliation with the South, 'to be accepted as equals, to re-join the mainstream of American political life'. Unwilling to attach himself to the old guard of Southern conservatives and with a distance between himself and the more strident voices of the moral majority, Carter made clear he was a political outsider. This path enabled him to win huge support from African-American voters.

(b) African Americans in 1980s and 1990s

Iwan Morgan's biography of Ronald Reagan makes it plain that African Americans were a group for whom the President's claim to have restored 'Morning Again in America' 'was largely a mirage'. He states:

> The racial gap in wages and employment had started to widen again in the stagflation-hit 1970s, a trend that continued in the supposedly prosperous decade that followed. Inner-city poverty, family breakdown, and gang violence further blighted many black lives. Making matters worse, the police offensive against the crack-cocaine epidemic in the second half of the 1980s and beyond was clearly targeted at young black males. By 1989, one analysis calculated, 23 per cent of African American men aged 18 to 29 were caught up within the criminal justice system – whether in prison, on parole, or on probation … It was later estimated that a black male born in 1991 had a 29 per cent chance of spending life in prison at some stage of his life, compared to 1 per cent for a white male.
>
> (Morgan, 2016 p.241)

Morgan argues:

> Despite lacking personal bigotry, he had already proved himself the most successful racial-backlash politician in US history before entering the White House. All of his campaigns, at both state and national level, featured rhetorical assaults on able-bodied welfare cheats that carried strong racial imagery … As president, Reagan espoused a colour-blind conservatism that denied any racial intent in his anti-statist agenda, which hit African Americans harder than white people because they relied on government to mitigate the structural inequalities of American society. Lack of interest rather than prejudice blinded him to this reality.
>
> (Morgan, 2016 p.241–2)

In terms of race, the Bush Campaign of 1988 was disturbing. Labouring to create a 'vision' and trailing the Democratic candidate, Michael Dukakis, Bush deliberately resorted to 'negative' campaigning. The most notorious example of this was a television advertisement about a black man, Willie Horton, who had been convicted of murder and rape, in Dukakis' home state of Massachusetts. Under a state furlough scheme supported by Dukakis, Horton had received ten weekend passes from prison. On one of these weekends Horton fled, kidnapped a young couple, stabbing the man, and repeatedly raping his girlfriend. Some observers claimed that the advert cynically blended an anti-crime message with racism.

Bush's promise of a 'kinder, gentler America' was not evident for African Americans in the late 1980s. In the same decade that Wall Street gorged itself in greed, in the great American cities, homicide rates were often terrifying. During the mid to late 1980s a crack cocaine epidemic generated a growing culture of gangs, guns and violence. Poor educational standards for the disadvantaged, a lack of sympathetic law enforcement in the most difficult areas and the failure of a largely white police force to build positive relations with

black communities in the inner city combined to create a terrible reputation for crime in great cities such as Detroit, New York City, Chicago and Washington, DC. In summary, 'a kinder gentler' America was also a nation that in almost every sense seemed predicated against giving black people the same opportunities as whites. The institutionalized racism of the police was particularly striking.

The savage beating, following a high-speed car chase of a black motorist, Rodney King, in March 1991, by four out-of-control white policemen from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), received worldwide attention. Their subsequent acquittal, a year later, brought a degree of racial tension to the country that was as intense as the Watts riots of 1965 or the fallout from the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968. The 1992 Los Angeles riots lasted for six days and resulted in fifty-five deaths and more than 2,000 injuries.

In handing authority to another Southern President, Bill Clinton from Arkansas, and his Vice President, Al Gore, from Tennessee, there seemed a striking opportunity for the neglect of the Reagan/Bush years to be addressed. During his 1992 campaign Clinton trod a fine line between his genuine empathy for people and his unwillingness to be portrayed as a typical 'tax and spend' Democrat. In January 1992 the candidate briefly returned to his home state where he was Governor. In sanctioning the execution of a mentally limited Black man, Ricky Ray Rector, he demonstrated his capacity to seek votes over principle. Clinton was well aware that previous Democratic candidates had been badly damaged by appearing to be 'weak' on crime.

Once in power, Clinton's record in appointments and the selection of his cabinet was more promising. During the campaign Clinton promised that he wanted his first cabinet to 'look like America', in terms of both gender and race. Clinton's initial Cabinet pick of six cabinet nominations included two African-Americans but only one woman. While the new president was initially criticized for not reflecting the support he had so substantially received from women, the new cabinet as it emerged was ultimately more diverse in terms of gender and race than its predecessors. Three women, four African-Americans and two Hispanic-Americans ensured that there was a marked break with tradition. Historians have been reasonably positive in terms of Clinton's attitude towards African Americans. His empathetic temperament, 'liberal' outlook, insistence on racial tolerance and his ability to attract a large number of votes from the African-American community have all been recognized.

23.6 THE 1980S – THE SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

The Republican Party's enthusiasm for Ronald Reagan marked a shift to the right that had a fairly long gestation period. Despite the massive spending of the Great Society, by 1980, America's inner cities were in decay, African Americans continued to live in poverty, educational standards were modest, crime rates soaring, prison populations burgeoning and to some observers this came together as a picture of American decline and moral decay. As the cities fell apart and jobs disappeared, America's standing in the world seemed also to be in terminal decline. Vietnam, the drawn-out hostage crisis in Iran and the rise of the highly competitive Far East economy had badly damaged American morale and certainty. Ronald Reagan's gift was to be able to 'translate' them into simple slogans that would find considerable traction as the American people came to decide who would lead them at the start of the new decade.

(a) Ronald Reagan and the presidential election of 1980

Born 1911, the son of an Illinois shoe salesman, Ronald Reagan lived an archetypal but remarkable American life. Renowned as a Hollywood film star he also enlisted in the

forces as a cavalry officer and as a member of the Air Corps. Politically he travelled from left to right, working in the film industry as the president of the Screen Actors Guild, but then becoming an outspoken anti-Communist. As governor of California from 1967 to 1975, he became a well-connected Republican in the mould of Eisenhower. He believed he was ready to secure the Republican nomination for the highest office and arrived at the Republican Convention in 1980, certain of victory. George H.W. Bush was an important figure in the East Coast Republican establishment so Reagan's decision to choose him as his running mate made them the perfect team to deliver a strongly right-wing agenda. Carter's foreign policy agenda left him wide open to allegations of weakness in the face of the Soviet threat. The discredited policy of détente, the weakness of the SALT II treaty, humiliation in Iran and fears over Soviet adventurism in Afghanistan all created a climate in which Reagan's cheerful personality, easy one-liners and most important of all, promises to end the painful spectacle of American decline achieved much more traction than Carter's weary disposition.

Carter's earnest attempts to deal with serious issues such as human rights and post-imperialism were lost in the simplicity of Reagan's appeal to reverse the country's moral and international decline. Carter suffered the worst defeat of an incumbent since Herbert Hoover in 1932. Reagan, at the age of sixty-nine became the oldest man ever to win the presidency. In the popular vote Reagan achieved 50.7 per cent compared to Carter's 41 per cent and the independent candidate John Anderson's score of 6 per cent. On Reagan's coat tails, the Republicans won control of the Senate and gained thirty-three seats in the House. If the presidency had been brought to its knees by the Iranian hostage crisis, then Ronald Reagan was the man who would reinvigorate the highest office. In the words of his biographer Edmund Morris,

> We became so positive a society under Ronald Reagan that we forget how low our national morale had sunk before he raised his right hand on 20 January 1981 and by plain force of character, reinvested the Presidency with authority and dignity … Reagan will be remembered, with Truman and Jackson, as one of the great populist Presidents, an instinctual leader who, in body and mind, represented the better temper of his times.
>
> (Morris, *The New Yorker*, 28 June 2004)

(b) Reagan's first term: 1981–5

1 'The end of big government'

In the honeymoon period after his first presidential triumph, Reagan stated that his election 'was not so much a victory of politics as it was a victory of ideas'. Then in his inaugural address in 1981, Ronald Reagan, perhaps the most effective spokesman for the right-wing, told the American people that: 'Government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem.' As Iwan Morgan puts it: 'Reaganism as a governing ideology promoted unfettered capitalism as a social good, rewarded individualism, and limited the state's role in mitigating inequality in American society … From the outset, Reagan's holy trinity consisted of cutting taxes, reducing government, and restoring America's defences' (Morgan, 2016 p.174–5).

Often underestimated, his ability to connect with grassroots America meant that the 'Great Communicator' was a highly capable political operator. His bravery when an assassination attempt in March 1981 left him with life-threatening injuries further enhanced his standing. Aided in his first term by a Republican majority in the Senate (for the first time since 1952) and a reduced Democratic margin in the House of Representatives, the

new President was able to cut a swathe through what he saw as the dense undergrowth of big government. In what Morgan describes as 'the most significant domestic spending retrenchment since World War II' a projected income tax cut of 30 per cent in three years was put forward as the means to 'stimulate growth, productivity and employment' (Morgan, 2016 p.176). A range of government programmes were put to the sword. Welfare measures including employment training, food stamps and disability benefits were all sharply reduced. Other areas suffering savage cuts included education, law enforcement, the arts and transport. With the labour unions in decline, millions of new jobs were created in newer, non-unionized service industries and small businesses. De-regulation in major industries such as mining, oil-drilling and transport illustrated the president's belief that government interference was costly and inefficient.

2 Reaganomics

Reagan appreciated that some areas of spending were off limits and so was unwilling to reduce spending on critical elements such as Medicare, social security or farm subsidies. However, in order to forestall major spending by various Congressional standing committees the administration proposed to replace all committee allocations with a single omnibus reconciliation measure. This enabled the president to anticipate 'the greatest reduction in government spending that has ever been attempted'. The Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981 curtailed 200 domestic spending programmes with projected savings of $140 billion over three years.

Meanwhile, within three years Congress reduced income tax rates by 25 per cent with a particularly striking reduction in the top rate from 70 to 50 per cent. As the 'Reagan Revolution' took hold, public spending flowed into the defence budget with a 10 per cent increase year on year for the next five years.

Not least in the President's formidable armoury was his ability to express what some people might make complicated into simple, folksy home-truths. 'If you reduce tax rates and allow people to spend or save more of what they earn, they'll be more industrious … The result: more prosperity for all – and more revenue for the government. A few economists call this principle supply-side economics. I just call it common sense' (Reynolds, 2009 p.510).

(c) The presidential election of 1984

Reagan's supporters were entitled to view the 1984 campaign with some optimism. Economic recovery had been strong – albeit with a huge budget deficit – the dollar was riding high on the international exchanges, inflation was relatively low and employment was high. Grateful for the confidence he had restored in both the Republican Party and the country at large, the GOP re-nominated by acclamation their President at an uneventful convention in August. For the Democrats a bitter, drawn-out struggle for the party's presidential nomination eventually saw the party place their faith in Walter Mondale of Minnesota, an old-style New Deal liberal, who had served as Carter's Vice-President. Mondale sought to extend his appeal by choosing a woman as his running mate: Geraldine Ferraro, a Congresswoman from New York. Reagan's campaign was typified by a hugely uplifting and optimistic political commercial that was referred to as 'It's Morning Again in America' and which celebrated America's economic and military strength. The country's mood was solidly conservative and Reagan's reassuring tone swept all before him. Reagan was returned by 525 to thirteen votes. In the popular vote the totals were devastating for the Democrats, with 54 million votes for Reagan compared to 37 million for Mondale. The victory was a personal triumph for the old campaigner.

(d) Ronald Reagan's second term

Despite his resounding personal triumph in 1984 the second term was in many ways a period of frustration, scandal and at times tragedy. The much vaunted 'Reagan Revolution' did not really transpire in the way the president had hoped. The 1980s were undoubtedly a period of economic growth but a series of tax cuts and huge expenditure on the military, with year-on-year defence spending increases of 10 per cent over five years, came at a heavy price. Reagan presided over a more than doubling of the national debt, which reached any eye watering $2.2 trillion by 1989. The trade deficit, measured at $42 billion during the Carter presidency, reached $150 billion by 1988.

As in the 1920s, economic well-being was extremely uneven. While huge profits were made by big business, the stock market provided extraordinary returns and the technology sector boomed, those at the lowest end of the income scale continued to suffer, with only a very marginal fall in measurements of poverty during the Reagan years. Even the tax reforms which were emblematic of the Reagan presidency were difficult to secure. Following division within his own party in December 1985, his original plans were derailed. It was not until months of presidential lobbying that Congress finally passed the Tax Reform Act in September 1986. This simplified the number of tax brackets down to just two and almost halved the maximum personal tax rate from 50 to 27 per cent.

Tragedy came in January 1986 when a huge television audience watched NASA's space shuttle, *Challenger*, with seven astronauts on board, explode shortly after take-off from Cape Canaveral. The aftermath of the disaster was hugely damaging. The official investigation identified a fault with a rubber seal on one of the solid-rocket boosters. It then emerged that NASA had known about the problems with the design of the seal but had allowed the mission to go ahead anyway. The whole space program was suspended and it would be more than two years before the next flight took place.

(e) The Iran Contra affair

Even the Great Communicator was placed in harm's way by the damage that unfolded from the Iran-Contra affair. His desire to roll back communism was underlined in his State of the Union Address in 1985. Reagan told the Congress: 'We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives – on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua – to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth' (Morgan, 2016 p.260). While the actions taken on Reagan's behalf in this case were often incompetent they were also shrouded in secrecy, covered-up dishonestly and at times were completely illegal. As with Nixon, these covert operations only came to light because of an outstanding tradition of high-quality investigative journalism. In late autumn 1986 news emerged suggesting that the United States, aided by Israel, had been secretly selling arms to Iran to try to secure the release of the American hostages captive in Lebanon in the hands of Iranian-inspired Islamic terrorists. This was in spite of the fact that the Reagan White House had publicly insisted there could be no negotiations with terrorists and had insisted to its allies that they should play no part in arming Iran.

As the investigative thread ran deeper it became clear that a group of US officials from inside the White House had covertly passed the proceeds of the arms sales to Iran to the Nicaraguan Contras. This went directly against the express instructions of the Congress. While the authority for these actions came from the National Security Adviser, Vice-Admiral Poindexter and the director of the CIA. William Casey, most of the wheeling and dealing was actually conducted by Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver P. North.

(f) Strategy of rollback in Afghanistan

The rollback strategy outlined in the State of the Union Address could be said to have achieved its objectives in Afghanistan. Since 1979 the Soviet Army had been at war against the Mujahedeen resistance forces and by 1985 many analysts believed a final Russian victory was in sight. Determined to avoid this at all costs, the Americans secretly provided a massive range of military hardware to the Afghan rebels, including shoulder-fired Stinger anti-aircraft missiles which inflicted devastating losses against the Russian's helicopter gunships. This amounted to the largest covert operation in the whole history of the American military and tipped the balance against the Russian mission to the extent that Gorbachev announced in 1988 that a full withdrawal was planned.

(g) Central America

While Congress supported the operation in Afghanistan, there was no such agreement to endorse a similar policy in Central America, where Reagan sought to depose the Marxist Sandinista regime from Nicaragua. To the Democrats on Capitol Hill, Reagan's intentions in Central America were the type of 'Yankee Imperialism' long-discredited to those with a liberal outlook. Unbeknown to the Congress though, Oliver North was busily encouraging the airlifting of military supplies paid for by Saudi Arabia to the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries known as the Contras. By 1986 the president himself was hosting expensive photo opportunities in the Roosevelt Room of the White House to add further funds to provide military supplies to the Contras.

While some limited activity against the Sandinistas was in the public domain, it was only through the oversight of the Democrat-controlled House Intelligence Committee (HIC) and the diligent investigative journalism of American correspondents that the degree of Contra activity became clear. As opposition to Reagan's plans mounted in the House, the President felt obliged to issue a clarion call for support to the Congress in April 1983. 'The national security of all the Americas is at stake in central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy' (Morgan, 2016 p.264). While the 'great communicator' was normally unerring in aligning himself with popular sentiment, on this occasion he was unable to generate the support he needed. In the public mind, Nicaragua and El Salvador were difficult to locate geographically, let alone the places to open new military adventures that seemed to readily evoke memories of Vietnam.

(h) Investigations into the Contra scandal

The frustration Reagan felt at failing to garner support was as nothing compared to the damage he sustained as investigations into the Contra scandal gathered pace. In the initial round of questioning Reagan insisted that arms had been shipped to Iran solely to promote links with moderate groups in Tehran, rather than to secure the release of US hostages but this assertion was quickly withdrawn. While initially eyebrows were raised as to the president's detached leadership style, a joint Congressional investigating committee of 1987 was less forgiving. It established that the climate of dishonesty and lack of regard for the Congress emanated from President Reagan himself. It emerged that documents had been interfered with or destroyed and in 1990 Poindexter was given a six-month jail sentence while North was also found guilty but was not imprisoned on a technicality.

The whole affair was a damaging one for the president and helped to drain energy and support from the second term. While some were willing to believe that Reagan himself

would not have sanctioned acts of sheer criminality others felt that he had significantly harmed relations between the executive branch and the Congress, damaged critical alliances and fatally undermined the public image of the affable president. In Iwan Morgan's outstanding biography of Ronald Reagan the author amply demonstrates that the president's claim that 'The United States gives terrorists no rewards and no guarantees. We make no concessions, we make no deals' (Morgan, 2016 p.270) had no 'basis in reality'. When the Tower Commission looked into the Iran-Contra case the president's final words in his written submission were: 'The simple truth is that I don't remember'. However, it is worth noting that in early 1984 the president gave a verbal instruction to his National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane to 'do everything you can' to bypass congressional restraint in supporting aid to the Contras. When McFarlane passed the president a note to say that the Saudi royal family had offered $1 million a month for the Contras, Reagan returned the note with the phrase 'Mum's the word' written on it (Morgan, 2016 p.267). It was, in many senses, a sad ending to the Reagan presidency and its legacy. Towards the end, the Iran-Contra affair became linked with concerns about the president's personal health and state of mind. Trusted biographer Edmund Morris believed he discerned signs of depression in the president by 1987 and Reagan's deeply loyal wife Nancy later observed that her husband 'always had a reputation for integrity, and it went right to his soul to see his character being questioned every day … It was a dark and hurtful time' (Morgan, 2016 p.279). 'Fortunately for Reagan, his success in negotiating arms control with the Soviet Union would soon overshadow his Iran-Contra ignominy and have far greater significance in defining his presidential legacy' (Morgan, 2016 p.285).

23.7 PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH 1989–92

(a) The presidential election of 1988

Those eight years of loyal service guaranteed the support of the moderate elements of the party, when Bush decided to run in in his own right for the 1988 presidential election. Bush's experience and solid character meant that he had a relatively untroubled primary campaign. While some derided Bush's lack of passion and 'the vision thing' he rose to the challenge and delivered a consummate acceptance speech at the party convention in August 1988. Bush himself ran a solid, if at times very negative campaign against the Democratic choice, Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts.

Dukakis was easy to characterize as a 'liberal' and took repeated criticism for his 'weak' record on crime and for an alleged lack of patriotism. Finally, Dukakis's cold personality and vague, rambling style put paid to his chances enabling Bush to become the first sitting Vice President since Martin Van Buren in 1836 to be elected directly to the Presidency. Despite his lethargic campaign, Dukakis was able to claim 46 per cent of the popular vote (41.8 million votes) but only ten states, including some states in the Northeast, the Mid-West and the Pacific Northwest. Bush prevailed in thirty-eight states, with 426 Electoral College votes and 48.8 million votes and emphatic victories in the South, the Southwest, the crucial state of California, most of the Mid-West farm belt and all of New England. It was a deserved victory and one that he would cherish.

(b) President Bush and the Reagan legacy

In his acceptance speech at the Republican Convention in August 1988 Bush expressed his heartfelt desire to lead his country so that it became 'a kinder, gentler nation'. He went on to say, 'I want a drug-free America and this will not be easy to achieve.' Finally, he

promised, 'I will keep America moving forward, always forward – for a better America, for an endless enduring dream and a thousand points of light' (Meacham, 2015 p.340).

During his own congressional career and as vice president Bush skilfully cultivated warm working relationships with both Republicans and Democrats. While Bush was committed to orderly governance he watched in horror as the dividing line in Congress became increasingly bitter, partisan and ideological. This was exemplified by the confrontational approach of the rising star of the Republican Right, Newt Gingrich from Georgia, who became the Republican Minority Leader in 1989 at the age of only forty-five. Gingrich, made his name by launching relentless verbal attacks upon the Democrats. He described his opponents as 'sick' and used emotional language to drum up a war of civilizations between 'true' conservatives like himself and 'liberals' whom he despised.

(c) Bush and domestic policy

With a Democratic Congress it became necessary for Bush to legislate from the centre while shoring up his defence against those in his own party who had moved sharply to the right and who would be ready to obstruct either financial commitments or legislative over-reach. Given these constraints, Bush made a positive start. Meacham offers this summary of the early legislative record of the Bush administration:

> Bush's understanding of Washington especially in his first two years, brought him domestic achievements. He sought and passed increased funding and tax credits for families with children, including enhancements for Head Start. He signed the Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act of 1989 to bail out troubled savings and loans and create the Resolution Trust Corporation. Bush banned the importation of most semi-automatic rifles. After a veto, he signed the Fair Labor Standards Amendments of 1989 raising the minimum wage.
>
> (Meacham, 2015 p.393)

In education the most important presidential initiative saw Bush call for national performance goals in K–12.

As vice president Bush had seen at close quarters the Reagan administration oppose legislation for clean-air and-water bills. With a growing groundswell of concern for the environment and visible signs of the damage caused by pollution from Los Angeles to Chicago, the new incumbent put his weight behind the complex Clean Air Act Amendments which was implemented with bipartisan support in 1990. A further piece of landmark legislation came with the Americans with Disabilities Act which tried to give people with disabilities access to their workplace and other buildings. In such cases, Bush was more than happy to use all of the presidential powers of persuasion open to him to generate sufficient Congressional support for his legislation.

(d) The economic recession

During the soaring euphoria of his Gulf War victory, few would have foreseen how quickly George Bush's fortunes would be reversed but the events of 1992 could hardly have been more calamitous. The stunning acquittal in April 1992 of four white policemen charged with the beating of Rodney King took President Bush into a situation where he seemed detached from the lives of black Americans. At the Republican Convention in New Orleans in August 1998 Bush, renowned for his caution, took a leap into the dark, with an

elaborate, personal promise on taxation: 'My opponent won't rule out raising taxes, but I will, and the Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push again and I'll say to them, "Read my lips: no new taxes"' (Meacham, 2015 p.339).

Doubtless, this clear water between Bush and Dukakis, played its part in the Republican victory. But by late spring 1990 the promise was seldom out of the president's thoughts. Sleepless nights, tension and a stiff neck bothered the president as it began to emerge that any serious attempt to address Reagan's record budget deficit would depend on raising additional new revenue. The deficit had assumed menacing proportions and was seen by many experts as a serious threat to the well-being of the American economy.

Then, at the Federal Reserve, the renowned economist Alan Greenspan announced that the American economy had entered a 'meaningful downturn'. The emerging recession can be traced back to 1990 and would persist until the middle of the following year. The sharp downturn in the nation's economy dragged the president's personal approval rating to just above 30 per cent in the election year. The extravagant economic success enjoyed by so many in the 1980s came to an abrupt halt with a recession in the summer of 1990 followed by economic stagnation that lasted for the remainder of Bush's time in office. This downturn took a severe toll upon the middle classes and professionals in the service sector, finance, technology and on Wall Street. Unemployment went through the ten million barrier, to reach the highest level for ten years, rising from 5.9 per cent in 1989 to 7.8 per cent half-way through 1991. Property values collapsed, personal debt and bankruptcy grew exponentially.

Faced with the choice of a government shut down and reversing the most important domestic pledge of the 1988 campaign, Bush opted for the latter (Meacham, 2015 p.412).

(e) The impact of the recession upon President Bush

Bush felt his own energy and emotional well-being sapped by the damaging nature of the recession. In his diary he lamented: 'We're going to be facing these humungous deficits and the economy is still down, down, down.' In May 1991 the president was suffering with an irregular heartbeat and was diagnosed with the thyroid disorder, Graves's disease, which drained his energy. While the sixty-six-year-old leader was in excellent personal shape it is possible that the strain of leadership and his exacting work regime were beginning to take its toll. Some of those close to him felt that with the election looming in 1992, President Bush had lost some of his old vigour.

The force of the recession meant that Bush was no longer guaranteed the support of his party. By the time Bush received the nomination for a second time he had begun to sound increasingly strident in his eagerness to accommodate the religious right. His fate was now inextricably linked to the fortunes of an outsider. A little-known governor, William Jefferson Clinton, from one of the poorest states in the union, Arkansas.

23.8 THE CLINTON YEARS

(a) The presidential election of 1992

With election victories in 1992 and 1996, William Jefferson Clinton would become the first Democrat to be elected to a second term since Franklin D Roosevelt in the 1936 campaign. For the second time in the recent past, the American people would choose a Southern governor to run their country. In 1976, Jimmy Carter from Georgia and now Bill Clinton, from Arkansas, a small state, with low budgets and considerable poverty, would take up the highest office. The two men were both from the South but in no other way were

they alike. Clinton was bright and ambitious, a graduate of Yale Law School and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. He had formed a formidable political partnership with his wife, Hillary Rodham, who was exceptionally gifted, driven and well organized. Representing the new, dynamic face of the American South, and ditching the tax and spend baggage of traditional democrats, the charismatic forty-five-year-old had paid his dues, starting with an energetic but unsuccessful campaign for Congress in 1974 at the age of just twenty-eight. Two years later he had secured the state's post of Attorney General and then, in 1978 became the youngest ever governor in the nation's history.

Not least, it was striking that one of Clinton's key strengths was his ability to secure support from large numbers of African-American voters without alienating the white vote. Furthermore, Clinton was able to attract external investment to previously 'unfashionable' Arkansas and to demonstrate very positive progress in educational standards within his state. By the 1990s, presidential campaigns had become so expensive and the fear of reputational damage so intense, that some of the most high-profile candidates in the Democratic Party wanted victory to be more than likely before they committed themselves and put everything on the line. Bush's surgical victory in the 1991 Gulf War made him so popular that many of the Democratic Party's big-hitters decided not to run at all in 1992. Their unwillingness to lose a fruitless campaign left the way open for younger, less seasoned candidates to take their chance. Most notably, Bill Clinton, awash with natural empathy, savvy to new forms of media and quick on his feet in political debate, decided to throw his hat into the ring when others had chosen to wait until 1996.

(b) The Clinton campaign

Campaigning under national scrutiny raised issues for Clinton, including questions of morality and character, alleged affairs, draft-dodging in the Vietnam War and questions about drug use. But as the recession took hold, the sharp-witted, energetic Clinton campaign team zeroed in on the issues they believed could propel their young candidate into the White House. In Bill Clinton's campaign 'war-room', his strategists, George Stephanopoulos and James Carville posted a message in Clinton's campaign headquarters, the 'War Room,' that became famous in itself. '"Change v. more of the same", "The Economy, stupid' and 'Don't forget health care"' (Reynold, 2009 p.439).

Beyond the slogans, Clinton proved to be a skilled and resilient campaigner, able to distance himself from the traditional burden of being defined as a 'tax and spend' candidate but rather a 'New Democrat' with innovative ideas for the future. Clinton's 'new thinking' was seen when he took the bold step of selecting another young Southerner, Al Gore from Tennessee as his running-mate. Conventional wisdom held that the ticket should always be balanced, so the traditional choice would have been a Northern liberal with much greater experience than the candidate himself. Instead, this new pairing seemed bright, energetic and forward-thinking.

(c) Shortcomings in the Bush campaign

While Clinton made headway targeting 'the forgotten middle class', Bush's prospects suffered a further blow when Ross Perot a billionaire from Texas, who had made his fortune in IT, threw his hat into the ring. Perot's quirky, populist campaign, with the slogan 'Make Ross the Boss!' captured the imagination of those who were becoming increasingly alienated from the two major parties. As an avowed outsider Perot derided the 'political nobility' in Washington who had 'forgotten that they worked for the people'. Perot's character was questioned when he withdrew from the race but then dramatically re-entered the

contest in October 1992, with little more than a month to go, but it would soon become clear that he could still command sizeable support.

Meanwhile, Clinton was able to portray America under Bush as 'in a ditch' and by October, trailing badly in the polls, the Bush campaign was imploding. Frustrated and lacking direction, Bush lashed out in a way that made him appear shrill and undignified. He claimed that his dog Millie knew 'more about foreign policy' than the Democratic 'bozos' challenging him and referred to Clinton's running-mate, Al Gore as 'Ozone Man' (Meacham, 2015 p.519) because of his pre-occupation with environmental issues. Finally, with horrendous timing for the incumbent, the former defence secretary Caspar Weinberger was indicted for his involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal. When hand-written minutes clearly showed that Bush had strongly supported the arms-for-hostage deal, Bush's five-year-old claim that he had been 'out of the loop' was exposed to devastating effect.

(d) Analysis of the 1992 election

One of the healthiest aspects of the November 1992 election was that voter turn-out, for so long in decline, reached its highest level for twenty-four years. 55.9 per cent of the electorate cast their vote, with Clinton carrying thirty-two states plus the District of Columbia, while Bush secured just eighteen states. In the Electoral College, Clinton secured 370 votes compared to Bush's figure of 168. Clinton captured 43 per cent of the popular vote with Bush managing just 37.5 per cent, which was the worst performance by a Republican since William Howard Taft in 1912. In a sign of things to come perhaps, Perot, as an Independent, took 18.9 per cent of the popular vote, or almost twenty million votes. This was the best performance by an Independent since Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose campaign, also in 1912. It was a sign that the politicians in Washington, DC, could not take public support for granted. Although these figures gave Clinton victory he had failed to capture a majority and so was the first minority president since 1968. From almost national anonymity to centre stage, Clinton attracted support from women, blacks, young people, Catholics, Jews and in the suburbs. He carried New England, the key industrial states in the Middle Atlantic region and most of the Mid-West. Surprisingly perhaps, the Clinton-Gore, Southern ticket failed to prise most of the former Confederate states from the Republicans. It was clear that the flow of support for Perot had fatally damaged Bush. To make matters even worse for the Republicans, the Democrats took control of both Houses of Congress. The long period of conservative, Republican ascendancy was over. It was time for change in the White House.

(e) President Clinton in the White House

1 Healthcare reform

The United States stands alone among the wealthy, developed nations in its failure to provide a universal system of health care through compulsory insurance schemes or taxation. While the Medicare programme introduced by Johnson in the 1960s provided a safety net to some degree, for the majority of US citizens, health care was linked to their employment package. Consequently, those without a job, who were injured or fell ill, could find themselves in a perilous position. According to President Clinton, as he began what would become a traumatic campaign to introduce reform, 'Over 37 million Americans, most of them working people and their little children, have no health insurance at all'. This constituted 15 per cent of the total population. It was clear that any politician trying to reform the complex, bureaucratic system would face massive resistance from huge pharmaceutical

companies, wealthy private hospitals, the powerful medical establishment and the health insurance industry, all of whom were invested heavily in maintaining the status quo.

Because of the searching demands of this task Clinton gave the job to the most able, trusted person he knew. His wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton seemed spectacularly well-equipped to take on this challenge. A brilliant student, she had graduated from Wellesley College and met her future husband at Yale Law School. He was beguiled by her intellect, drive and ambition. Her guidance and support for him in his early political career in Arkansas was central to his rise to power. Now, in the White House, she prepared to deliver the mother of all reforms. Typically, Hillary applied herself with energy and diligence but in a sense this was also her downfall. Her report, more than a 1,000 pages long was easily shredded by her opponents, who could highlight the cost and complexity of the Clinton's Health Care Plan.

2 Opposition to the healthcare plan

By now, Clinton's enemies were circling. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich treated most things to do with the Clintons with revulsion, but his bile was mostly reserved for the Health Care Plan and for Clinton's adultery, which was, by now, an open secret. Gingrich had long believed that his own personal political future was best placed on the far-right of the Republican Party. Gingrich argued that the Health Care Plan was part of a larger malaise. In the build-up to the 1994 mid-term elections, he put forward his 'Contract with America' which advocated 'the end of government that is too big, too intrusive, and too easy with the public's money' (Johnson and Broder, 1997 p.546). He proposed swingeing cuts to welfare and social programmes and to tax rates. Welfare and Medicaid schemes would be moved to the orbit of the individual states rather than the federal government. Crucially, Gingrich tied this message to a broader moral crusade for the restoration of American family values.

The rivalry with Clinton was becoming increasingly bitter and personal. This reached a stand-off of tumultuous proportions in the winter of 1995. Constitutionally, the House, with Gingrich as its leader, controlled the purse strings but the budget it proposed had to be approved by the president. When Clinton vetoed the 1996 budget proposals the federal government and all of its associated programmes and agencies came to a juddering halt. During a three-week stand-off around Christmas time almost a million federal employees went without their December pay packet. Finally, the Republicans gave way and Clinton's revised budget was passed. While Clinton may have secured a victory on this occasion, the fact was that political life was becoming increasingly bitter and polarized.

This was typified by the actions of Timothy McVeigh, a veteran, whose anger against the government prompted him to explode a truck packed with explosive outside the largest federal building in the centre of Oklahoma City.

On 19 April 1995, President Clinton was taking part in a photo opportunity with the Turkish Prime Minister when the White House press secretary Michael McCurry leant forward and whispered into his ear, with the news that CNN were reporting that a bomb had destroyed part of a federal building in Oklahoma City. More details were provided by Leon Panetta, White House Chief of Staff who passed a note that said, 'Half of federal building in O.K. City blown up – expect heavy casualties'. It was perhaps a measure of Clinton's personal growth that he was able to combine firing off a score of practical questions and commands about the security response to the incident, express genuine concern for the casualties and display an inner determination not to be accused of being detached from a public disaster, as he had been depicted in the aftermath of the Waco disaster two years earlier. In the White House briefing room, the President denounced the 'evil cowards' who had perpetrated the latest atrocity and pledged that 'we will find the people who did this' and that 'when we do, justice will be swift, certain and severe. These people

are killers and they must be treated like killers' (Harris, 2006 p.179). It soon became clear that the casualty figures were terribly high. 168 people had been killed, including nineteen children. Clinton correctly claimed that the Oklahoma City bombing went beyond the twisted actions of one angry individual. Paranoia, hatred, armed militia groups, outlandish radio talk-show hosts and extremist websites were all ingredients in a toxic wave of anti-government sentiment at its most striking.

(f) The presidential election of 1996: *Clinton* v. *Dole*

Clinton's draining battles with Gingrich, the federal shutdown, an increasingly ideological struggle with the Republican Party, and lingering accusations of financial impropriety and sexual scandal meant that the president could not face the prospect of re-election in 1996 with any certainty. However, Clinton was personally resilient and convinced that he still had important work to do in the White House. To the dismay of his opponents, the self-styled 'Comeback Kid' began to show signs of a resurgence in 1996. Clinton's sensitive political antennae, not to mention astute use of focus groups, told him that many people were uncomfortable with the more extreme members of the Republican Party.

Clinton skilfully shifted his position towards the centre ground and as in the old days in Arkansas, was able to glide away from issues that could damage his campaign. With a focus on reducing welfare and combatting youth crime, Clinton was further boosted by the Republican's selection of the veteran senator from Kansas, Bob Dole. Dole's age, terse manner and commitment to anti-abortion all played into Clinton's hands. Crucially, the campaign was well-timed for the incumbent in that it coincided with an economic uplift. With prosperity in the air, Dole seemed to have little to offer those voters who wanted to support a political moderate. Many Americans did not doubt that the president's personal conduct may have been lax, but in a broader sense they felt that the country itself was moving in the right direction. However, Clinton's emphatic victory in 1996 did not mean that the rumours would go away. Two years later, the denials that the president had frequently made came back to haunt him.

(g) The Lewinsky scandal – 1998

In the days of Nixon and Watergate, the journalists of the *Washington Post* brought to the nation's attention the skullduggery at the Democratic Party Headquarters that, thanks to the diligence of Woodward and Bernstein, was eventually traced directly back to the Oval Office itself. Now, on 21 January 1998 the same, formidable newspaper was once again bringing the nation's leader to account. The Post now told its readers that Bill Clinton had indulged in a sexual relationship with White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. To make matters worse, the president had lied under oath – in a sexual harassment claim brought by Paula Jones – in denying an affair with Ms. Lewinsky. With speculation swirling around him an agitated president angrily claimed: 'I did not have sexual relations with that woman – Miss Lewinsky.' Clinton was lying and this led to a protracted, unedifying process as his opponents reacted to new, damaging details with glee.

No matter how significant the achievement of turning a trillion-dollar deficit into a projected surplus, Clinton's ideological enemies were in no mood to call off the hounds. The man charged with investigating the charges against the president was Kenneth Starr, an 'independent counsel' initially tasked with examining questions relating to the Clinton's financial affairs. Starr's investigation, supported by the Congress was now asked to encompass the matter of Monica Lewinsky. For months, political partisanship, lurid details, highly personal questions and an element of religious morality engulfed the

president. In August 1998, Clinton was at bay and forced to admit how he had lied the previous January. On national TV he admitted: 'Indeed, I did have a relationship with Ms. Lewinsky that was not appropriate. In fact, it was wrong. It constituted a critical lapse in judgement and a personal failure on my part for which I am solely and completely responsible … I misled people, including even my wife' (Reynolds, 2009 p.547). Clinton had not been a fan of formal government meetings and so it emerged that of only two cabinet meetings to take place between January and August 1998, the first one had been used by the president to assure his colleagues that there was no truth in the Lewinsky rumours. The second meeting was for the president to apologize to the cabinet for lying to them in January.

(h) Impeachment

Amid the zealous clamour from the far-right, Starr presented a lurid, explicit report to the Congress in September and stated that the president's lies and misconduct 'may constitute grounds for an impeachment'. The Republican leadership in the House smelt blood and Clinton became the first president since Andrew Jackson in 1846 and only the second in US history to face impeachment. In fact, the House leaders had placed themselves beyond the public mood. Some observers felt the Congress itself was being demeaned by the lurid nature of the content being placed before it and the momentum against the president began to ease. The Republicans were disappointed by the results of the 1998 mid-term elections and Gingrich, having badly overplayed his hand, resigned. Nevertheless, it took until February 1999 for the charges of perjury and obstructing justice that had been made against the president to be rejected and for it to become certain that the two-thirds majority needed in the Senate to impeach a president would not materialize.

(i) Clinton's economic record

Despite the economic well-being of the Reagan years, it could be argued that the huge federal debt built up during the Republican period was unsustainable. The debt issue under Reagan and the recession under Bush were followed by a significant upturn in the nation's economic well-being and stability. Iwan Morgan sees Clinton's economic record as the 'defining achievement' of his presidency and according to one Harvard analyst 'macroeconomic performance in the 1990s' was, 'exceptional'. Clinton possessed a genuine interest and some expertise in economics, advocating a 'third way' between Reagan's conservatism and the big spending of a liberal, interventionist government (Morgan, 2012 p.65–6). The rise of the Chinese economy meant that America found it increasingly difficult to compete with manufacturers in the Far East. In response, Clinton and his economic strategists understood that the United States needed to direct its renewal through high-wages, high-productivity and the latest technology while making a serious, systematic attempt to tackle the deficit. Within a year of entering the White House Clinton pushed through a new budget aimed at drastically lowering the national debt. In addition, the Bush recession began to steadily recede, boosting confidence that happier times were ahead. In particular, investment in new communications technology grew spectacularly as did share values on the Dow Jones index.

The president used the 1996 State of the Union address to proclaim that the era of big government was over. His subsequent victory in the presidential election of 1996 gave Clinton the opportunity to further advance his economic agenda. In legislative terms, this led to the Balanced Budget Act and the Tax Relief Act of 1997. These bills offered a

combination of preserving some domestic programmes and favourable tax cuts for middle- and lower-income families.

Just after nine o' clock on the evening of 27 January 1998 President Clinton strode into the House of Representatives to make his annual State of the Union Address. With the Lewinsky scandal swirling around him, some observers believed that the strain upon the President would be manifest. But as he opened his speech, it became clear that Clinton was an in an upbeat mood:

> We have fourteen million new jobs; the lowest unemployment in twenty-four years; the lowest core inflation in thirty years; incomes are rising and we have the highest home ownership in history. Crime has dropped for a record five years in a row. And the welfare rolls are at their lowest levels in twenty-seven years. Our leadership in the world is unrivalled. Ladies and gentlemen, the state of the union is strong.

But then came the zinger! 'For three decades, six presidents have come before you to warn of the damage deficits pose to our nation. Tonight, I come before you to announce that the federal deficit – once so incomprehensibly large that it had eleven zeros – will be simply zero.' Given the scale of this achievement it might have been tempting for the president to stop there and bask in the moment. But now he went further. 'If we balance the budget for next year, it is projected that we will have a sizeable surplus in the years that immediately follow. What should we do with this projected surplus? I have a simple four-word answer: Save … Social … Security … First!' (Klein, 2002 p.18).

Finally, Morgan offers this perspective on Clinton's overall economic record:

> Overall, Clinton's record was marginally superior to those of fellow Democrats Harry Truman, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, who were also in the running for the title of economic champ … a persuasive case can be made that Clinton was a particularly effective economic president. Firstly, he developed a coherent agenda for promoting economic growth and followed this plan throughout his presidency. Secondly, he took political risks – such as the 1993 deficit reduction plan, the drive for NAFTA ratification, the 1995 bailout of Mexico, and denying the steel industry the tariffs it wanted – in the long-term interests of the economy. Thirdly, he introduced a significant institutional reform to improve the coordination of economic policy by creating the National Economic Council.
>
> (Morgan, 2012 p.81)

23.9 THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2000

(a) Al Gore

Given the familiarity of the two candidates it seemed possible that the first American Presidential Election of the twenty-first century might be somewhat predictable or mundane. Instead, the clash between Al Gore, twice Clinton's Vice-President, and George W. Bush son of the former president turned out to be the most controversial election in US history, not for the campaign itself, but for the way in which the votes were counted and the outcome decided. The 1990s had been marked by a bitter partisanship between the two main parties and the two candidates on this occasion had little in common. Al Gore was a committed environmentalist noted for his film, *An Inconvenient Truth,* which highlighted the damaging consequences of global warming. Alongside President Clinton he had alienated the powerful gun lobby, the tobacco industry and pro-life movement. In the more

conservative areas of the country his support for gay issues caused further discontent. However, in the second term the Clinton/Gore team had delivered good numbers economically and generally avoided damaging foreign entanglements.

(b) George W. Bush

George W. Bush was the Governor of Texas where he had courted controversy with his support for the death penalty. Educated at Yale University, Bush was teetotal (after a period of heavy drinking in his earlier life), a born-again Christian and passionate opponent of abortion under almost any circumstances. However, he was an experienced campaigner and presented himself as a compassionate conservative rather than an ideologue. With the experience of Karl Rove as his chief strategist and Dick Cheney, who had served as Defense Secretary during the administration of President George H. W. Bush, the Republican team was not lacking in substance. No one though, on either side, could have foreseen what happened next.

As the polls closed, the Bush dynasty gathered for a private family dinner at the Shoreline Grill restaurant in Austin. But the exit polls and early calls from the major networks caused dismay in the Bush entourage. It appeared that Gore had carried Pennsylvania, Michigan and the key state of Florida, where George W's brother, Jeb, was Governor. Then through the night the news changed and it appeared that Florida had gone to Bush. Gore called Bush to concede, but then the networks reported that the numbers were too close to call and Gore retracted his concession. The definitive numbers began to emerge. In the popular vote, it appeared that Gore had prevailed but by as small a margin as 500,000 votes. However, what counted was the Electoral College, in which 538 votes were allocated on a state-by-state basis. After all of the votes had been counted, and in some cases, re-counted, all of the attention focused on the key state of Florida. With an electorate of about 5.8 million people, a recount placed Bush just 500 votes ahead of Gore. This was so close that Gore insisted on re-counts in several of the individual counties where the votes had been cast. As the Constitution set out, the issue now passed to the Supreme Court. It took until 12 December 2000, more than a month after the election, for the definitive verdict to be reached. By five votes to four the Supreme Court rejected demands for a state-wide recount and this effectively passed the presidency to George W. Bush. The next day, in a moment of statesmanship that was simply outstanding, Gore delivered the most gracious of concession speeches. In a moment when the Electoral College, the Supreme Court and the bitter nature of adversarial politics caused anger and turmoil Gore's speech pointed to the chance for the United States to come together. But the circumstances in which that would happen, on a crisply perfect, blue-skied beautiful day in September 2001, were unimaginable.

23.10 GEORGE W. BUSH'S FIRST TERM (2001–5)

During his first year in office, the nature of President Bush's administration quickly became clear – he was on the far right, or neo-conservative, wing of the Republican party; one analyst later described him as 'the most hard-right president since Herbert Hoover'. Although he had campaigned as a 'compassionate conservative', he began by introducing massive tax cuts amounting to $1.35 trillion for the wealthiest citizens. He also signalled his intention to spend less on social services. He drew criticism from the European Union and other countries when he announced that the United States was withdrawing from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which aimed to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

The president soon faced a testing crisis with the 11 September terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. He responded decisively, declaring war on terrorism and building up an international coalition to carry out the campaign. During the next eighteen months the Taliban regime was removed from Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein was driven from power in Iraq. However, it proved more difficult to bring peace to these countries; two years after the overthrow of Saddam in April 2003, American soldiers in Iraq were still being killed by terrorists. There were reports that even in Afghanistan the Taliban were creeping back and gaining a hold in certain areas.

Meanwhile, at home the economy began to run into problems. The annual budget published in February 2004 showed that there was a deficit of well over 4 per cent of GDP (the EU ceiling was 3 per cent). Reasons for this were:

- increasing expenditure on anti-terrorist security measures and the continuing cost of the operations in Iraq;
- a fall in government revenue because of the huge tax cuts for the wealthy;
- extra credits given to farmers.

The government's policies were having mixed effects, the most striking one of which was the ever-widening gap between rich and poor. Statistics published at the end of 2003 showed that the richest 1 per cent of Americans owned well over 40 per cent of their nation's wealth. (For comparison, in the UK the richest 1 per cent owned 18 per cent of the total wealth.) This was not due solely to Bush's policies – it had been developing over the previous twenty years; but the trend accelerated after 2001, partly because of the tax cuts. The Centre for Public Integrity reported that every member of the Bush cabinet was a millionaire, and that its total net worth was more than ten times that of the Clinton cabinet.

At the other extreme there was increasing poverty, caused partly by rising unemployment and partly by low wages. Three million people had lost their jobs since Bush took office, and over 34 million, one in eight of the population, were living below the poverty line. Unemployment benefit was only paid for six months, and in some states – Ohio was an outstanding example – thousands of people were surviving with the help of charity food kitchens run by churches. At the end of Bush's first four years in office, the number of Americans living below the poverty line had increased by 4.3 million since he became president in January 2001.

Why was this happening in the world's richest country? The government blamed the closure of so many factories on foreign imports, and singled out China as the main culprit. The poor received only the minimum of help from the government because, basically, the Bush administration held fast to the traditional conservative American principles of *laissez-faire*: government should be kept to a minimum and should not have a direct role in alleviating poverty. Social welfare was thought to weaken self-reliance, whereas people should be encouraged to help themselves. Taxation was considered to be an unwarranted interference with individual property, and the wealthy should not feel obliged to help the poor, unless they chose to do so. The main obligation of business was to maximize profits for the benefit of shareholders; to that end, all government interference and regulation should be kept to a minimum.

Unfortunately this approach led to an 'anything goes' atmosphere, and some disturbing developments took place. In the absence of proper regulation, it was tempting for companies to 'manipulate' their accounts to show ever-increasing profits, and thereby keep their share prices rising. But this practice could not continue indefinitely; in November 2001 the energy trading company Enron went bankrupt after a series of secret deals – unknown both to the authorities and to investors – which turned out to be disastrously loss-making. Enron's chief executive and his board members had to face Congressional investigations for fraud. Several other major companies followed; tens of thousands of people lost their

investments, while employees of the companies lost their retirement pensions when the pension funds disappeared.

As the election of November 2004 approached, many analysts believed that these mounting problems would bring about a Republican defeat. However, President Bush won a decisive, though still fairly close victory over his Democrat challenger, Senator John Kerry. Some 58.9 million Americans voted for Bush compared with 55.4 million for Kerry. The Republicans also increased their majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The growing poverty and unemployment in some states had apparently not been widespread enough to win the day for Kerry. *Other reasons suggested for the Republican victory include*:

- The Democrats failed to produce a clear campaign message setting out what the party stood for. Consequently, many voters decided it was wiser to stick with the tried and tested Bush rather than switch to Kerry, who was perceived as an unknown quantity.
- The Democrats failed to convince enough voters that they could be trusted to keep the country safe and secure.
- The Republicans were seen by the Christian right as the party that stood for moral and family values, whereas the Democrats were thought to be too sympathetic towards abortion and gay marriages.
- The Republicans were more successful than they had been in the 2000 election at galvanizing their supporters into going along to vote.

23.11 GEORGE W. BUSH'S SECOND TERM (2005–8)

Disaster struck in the first year of President Bush's second term, just as it had in the first. This time it was Hurricane Katrina which battered the southern coast on 29 August. New Orleans was right at the centre and suffered extensive damage and flooding. Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama were badly affected and Bush declared a state of emergency in all three states. He toured the area, ordered federal cash to be used in the recovery and rebuilding process and sent the National Guard in to help the locals. The recovery was extremely slow and Bush was criticized for the government response and the apparent incompetence of those appointed to organize the recovery programme. Some observers believe that this flawed response to Hurricane Katrina was one of the reasons for the Republican defeats in the mid-term Congressional elections of 2006, which left Bush as a 'lame-duck' president – a president faced with a hostile Congress. In the area of health and social security, Bush's record was mixed. Increased funding introduced in 2003 for the National Institute of Health (NIF) was withdrawn because of rising inflation – the first time it had been reduced for thirty-six years. He approved an addition to the Medicare health-insurance scheme to provide assistance towards paying for prescription medicines. However, in 2007 he vetoed the State Children's Health Insurance Programme (SCHIP), which would have extended the amount of free healthcare for the children of poor families. It was to be funded by an increase in the tax on cigarettes, and had been approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate, both of which had a Democrat majority following the 2006 Congressional elections. Bush opposed the programme because he believed it was too close to socialism.

In the early part of Bush's second term the economic situation seemed to be improving. Unemployment fell but the underlying problem was still the huge budget deficit. At a time of reduced taxation, defence and military spending were increasing, thanks to the continued campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the Taliban insurgency was assuming crisis proportions. In December 2007 the country had slipped into a recession. Unemployment rose rapidly and in just one month – February 2008 – 63,000 jobs were lost. The president

tried to help by launching an aid programme in which thousands of people received a large tax rebate and some struggling businesses were given tax breaks. This was not enough to turn the tide, and all parts of the economy were affected. House sales and prices fell dramatically, and there was a sub-prime mortgage crisis when people were unable to keep up repayments. This threw mortgage lenders into difficulties and *by September 2008 the United States was on the brink of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.* On 15 September 2008 Lehman Brothers, the fourth largest investment bank in the United States, filed for bankruptcy. In November 2008 over half a million jobs were lost. The National Bureau of Labor reported that by the time Bush left office no fewer than 2.9 million jobs had been lost since he came to power in January 2001.

As the November 2008 presidential election drew near, the Republicans could hardly have faced a more inauspicious situation. When Bush took office in 2001 the United States had a huge budget surplus of $2 trillion. That was not counting the national debt, which stood at $5.7 trillion. However, many economists predicted that if the government – of whichever party – continued on the same path followed by Bill Clinton, the national debt should be paid off in about ten years. Bush decidedly did not continue on the Clinton road. First of all he cut taxes – a very popular move; unfortunately that meant a reduction in government revenue of $1.8 trillion. Next he declared the 'war on terror', leading to the invasion of Iraq and the operations in Afghanistan. These were extremely expensive and were financed by borrowing to the tune of $1.5 trillion. The financial crisis and the recession reduced government income still further, so that by November 2008, according to political commentator Corey Robin, 'Bush had squandered the surplus and nearly doubled the size of the debt, adding more to it than any other president in US history.'

In the election on 4 November 2008 the Democrat presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, won a comfortable victory over Republicans John McCain and Sarah Palin. The decisive factors were the unpopularity of the Iraq war, which McCain supported and Obama opposed, and the continuing economic crisis, which was blamed on Bush. Obama campaigned on a slogan of 'Washington must change', promising universal healthcare, full employment, green policies and a United States respected instead of feared by its enemies. He also labelled McCain's programme damagingly as 'more of the same', referring to his close association with the unpopular Bush over the previous eight years. This election made history: until 2008 both president and vice-president had always been WASPS; *now the president was an African American and the vice-president was a Roman Catholic.*

23.12 BARACK OBAMA (2009–13)

The most pressing problem facing the new president was the sorry state of the economy. Wasting no time, in February 2009 he signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This was a plan setting aside $787 billion to rescue the economy by creating new jobs. In June 2009 General Motors filed for bankruptcy, the largest manufacturing collapse in US history. Fortunately the government was able to step in and take over 60 per cent of the business. Then in July 2010 came the Financial Reform Act, designed to reduce the power of the large banks and provide more protection for customers and investors. This was a step in the right direction, but critics argued that it did not go far enough to be certain of preventing another financial crash like that of 2008. Obama was determined to deal with the other source of discontent – the war in Iraq. His first act as president was to ask his military leaders to prepare a plan for what he called a 'responsible' withdrawal of troops from Iraq, to be completed by the end of 2011. This was achieved: the war was formally declared to be over, although it was not the end of violence, since Sunnis and Shias continued to fight each other.

Unfortunately, the war in Afghanistan was decidedly not over; by the middle of 2009 the Taliban had been so successful that they controlled many areas and had set up shadow governments and law courts there. Many observers were convinced that it was impossible to defeat the Taliban militarily, and that talks would have to begin. Even President Karzai of Afghanistan thought this was the only way forward. However, Obama decided to have another 'surge', and in December 2009 he ordered an extra 30,000 troops into Afghanistan with orders to '"seize" the initiative'.

Another Obama initiative concerned the Arab–Israeli problem. In a speech in Cairo in June 2009 he had promised to form a new relationship of trust and co-operation between Islam and the United States, putting behind them years of suspicion and discord, and calming the dispute with Iran over nuclear weapons. The Iranian government made no response, but most other countries welcomed the announcement. He even apologized to Muslims for American military strength, the war in Iraq, Guantánamo and colonialism. It was probably because of this initiative that President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2009. It was a great honour for him, but it drew mixed reactions – critics said it was too early for such an award, as he had not actually achieved anything yet. Then in a speech at the UN General Assembly (23 September 2010), he proposed that a separate Palestinian state should be set up within a year and requested President Netanyahu of Israel to stop allowing new Israeli settlements to be built on land destined to be part of Palestine. Predictably, the Israelis were furious: they protested strongly and sought support from the Israeli lobby in the United States. Massive pressure was put on Obama by the conservatives until he felt obliged to change his position. The next demand for statehood by the Palestinians in September 2011 was vetoed at the United Nations – by the United States! Understandably they felt betrayed, and the new 'rapprochement' between the United States and Islam was looking distinctly shaky. Nor did it help that the Guantánamo Bay prison, which in January 2009 Obama had promised would be closed within the year, was still fully operational. In domestic affairs Obama also ran into problems: there were great objections to his healthcare reforms designed to bring some 30 million more Americans within the protection of health insurance. Eventually he was able to sign the changes into law (March 2010), but the Republicans were so determined to strike down 'Obamacare' that twenty-six of the states challenged the legality of parts of the legislation via the Supreme Court. This took over two years to reach a decision – in June 2012 the Court ruled that the whole of the legislation was legal. It was due to be introduced piece by piece until it became fully operational in 2018, taking the United States closer than ever before to guaranteed coverage for everybody. In the mid-term elections of November 2010 the Democrats lost sixty-three seats and control of the House of Representatives, probably because the economy was showing very little sign of improvement and unemployment remained static. Leading the opposition to Obama was the Tea Party movement, a conservative group which advocated reduced taxes, lower government spending and paying off some of the national debt; in other words, a return to general austerity. They took their name from the Boston Tea Party of 1773, when colonists had protested against the British tax on tea by dumping tea taken from British ships into the harbour. After months of argument, in August 2011 Obama gave way and signed an austerity bill that, among other things, reduced the pay of federal workers, cut defence spending and endorsed a more aggressive austerity programme.

It was claimed that this had saved the United States from what would have been a disastrous debt default, though others argue that Obama would never have allowed the United States to default; there was money in reserve to pay its debts, and there were alternative savings that he could have made, rather than default. Whatever the truth, the euphoria was only short-lived: only four days later the ratings agency, Standard and Poor's, cut the US triple-A rating for the first time, reducing it to AA+ status. The reason – the United States had failed to tackle its massive budget deficit and its equally massive debts. There were

two bright spots among the gloom, though even they were controversial. In December 2010 President Obama signed an historic law repealing the ban on gay soldiers serving openly in the military – a largely popular move, but one which appalled the religious right. In May 2011 it was announced that Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda leader, had been killed by American troops in Pakistan. This caused widespread celebrations in the United States but brought relations with Pakistan to an all-time low. As the United States moved towards the next presidential election in November 2012, unemployment was still high and economic recovery very slow. Most commentators predicted a close election, but in the event, Obama won a comfortable victory over his Republican challenger, Mitt Romney. One important reason for this was the changing racial makeup of the United States – African Americans and Hispanics make up a steadily increasing proportion of the population, and overwhelmingly, they support the Democrats. The Republicans' anti-gay and anti-abortion policies lost them votes, and so too did the perception that Romney, a multi-millionaire, cared more for the interests of wealthy plutocrats than for the needs of ordinary people. Controversially, many Christian-right voters turned against Romney on the grounds that, since he was a Mormon, he could not be a true Christian. In the end Obama won much support for his demand that the wealthy (those earning more than $250,000 a year) should pay more in taxes.

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Part

V

Decolonization and after

Chapter

24 The end of the European empires

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the nations of Europe still claimed ownership of vast areas of the rest of the world, particularly in Asia and Africa.

- *Britain's Empire was the largest in area*, consisting of India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, enormous tracts of Africa and many assorted islands and other territories, such as Cyprus, Hong Kong, the West Indies, the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar.
- *France had the second largest empire*, with territories in Africa, Indo-China and the West Indies. In addition, Britain and France still held land in the Middle East, taken from Turkey at the end of the First World War. Britain held Transjordan and Palestine and France held Syria. They were known as *'mandated' territories*, which meant that Britain and France were intended to 'look after' them and prepare them for independence.
- *Other important empires* were those of the Netherlands (Dutch East Indies), Belgium (Congo and Ruanda Urundi), Portugal (Angola, Mozambique and Guinea), Spain (Spanish Sahara, Ifni, Spanish Morocco and Spanish Guinea) and Italy (Libya, Somalia and Eritrea).

Over the next 30 years, remarkable changes took place. By 1975 most of these colonial territories had gained their independence. Sometimes, as in the Dutch and French colonies, they had to fight for it against determined European resistance. The problems involved were often complex; in India there were bitter religious differences to resolve. In some areas – Algeria, Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Rhodesia – large numbers of whites had settled, and they were relentlessly hostile to independence, which would place them under black rule. Britain was prepared to grant independence when it was felt that individual territories were ready for it, and most of the new states retained a link with Britain by remaining in the British Commonwealth (a group of former British-controlled nations which agreed to continue associating together, mainly because there were certain advantages to be gained from doing so).

The main British territories which gained independence, sometimes changing their names (new names in brackets), were:

India; Pakistan – 1947
Burma; Ceylon (Sri Lanka) – 1948
Transjordan (Jordan) – 1946; Palestine – 1948
Sudan – 1956

Malaysia; Gold Coast (Ghana) – 1957
Nigeria; Somaliland (became part of Somalia); Cyprus – 1960
Tanganyika and Zanzibar (together forming Tanzania) – 1961
Jamaica; Trinidad and Tobago; Uganda – 1962
Kenya – 1963
Nyasaland (Malawi); Northern Rhodesia (Zambia); Malta – 1964
British Guiana (Guyana); Barbados; Bechuanaland (Botswana) – 1966
Aden (South Yemen) – 1967
Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) – 1980

The other colonial powers were at first determined to hold on to their empires by military force. But they all gave way in the end.

The main territories gaining independence were:

French
Syria – 1946
Indo-China – 1954
Morocco; Tunisia – 1956
Guinea – 1958
Senegal; Ivory Coast; Mauretania; Niger; Upper Volta (later Burkina-Faso); Chad; Madagascar (Malagasey); Gabon; French Sudan (Mali); Cameroun (Cameroon); Congo; Oubangui-Shari (Central Africa); Togo; Dahomey (Benin from 1975) – 1960

Dutch
East Indies (Indonesia) – 1949
Surinam – 1975

Belgian
Congo (Zaire 1971–97) – 1960
Ruanda-Urundi (became two separate states: Ruanda and Burundi) – 1962

Spanish
Spanish Morocco – 1956
Guinea (Equatorial Guinea) – 1968
Ifni (became part of Morocco) – 1969
Spanish Sahara (divided between Morocco and Mauretania) – 1975

Portuguese
Guinea (Guinea-Bissau) – 1974
Angola; Mozambique – 1975
East Timor (seized by Indonesia later in 1975) – 1975

Italian
Ethiopia – 1947
Libya – 1951
Eritrea (became part of Ethiopia) – 1952
Italian Somaliland (became part of Somalia) – 1960

24.1 WHY DID THE EUROPEAN POWERS GIVE UP THEIR EMPIRES?

During the 1990s more documents dealing with decolonization became available, enabling historians to investigate more deeply the motives of the European powers in giving up their colonies and the different ways in which they carried out their withdrawals. The main debate that has developed is about the extent to which decolonization was caused by local nationalist movements, and how far it was brought about by outside political and economic considerations. Robert Holland, a leading exponent of what has become known as the '*metropolitan thesis*', believes that outside forces – metropolitan forces – were more important. He writes:

> The great colonial powers divested themselves of their subordinate possessions, not because internal pressures within their colonies left them with no other choice, but in the wake of a revisionist process whereby imperial roles came to be seen as incongruent with more 'modern' goals in the fields of foreign and economic policy.

Other historians feel that more credit must be given to the strength of local nationalist movements, and they acknowledge that in some cases the imperial power was quite simply expelled by sheer force. For example, would the British have left East and Central Africa for purely 'metropolitan' reasons if there had been no nationalist movements in these areas? Of course there is no simple answer. What can be said with certainty is that all these factors were present in varying degrees in all colonial territories.

(a) Nationalist movements

These had been in existence in many of Europe's overseas colonies, especially those in Asia, for many years before the Second World War. *Nationalists* were people who had a natural desire to get rid of their foreign rulers so that they could have a government run by people of their own nationality. Although the European powers claimed to have brought the benefits of western civilization to their colonies, there was a general feeling among colonial peoples that they were being exploited by the Europeans, who took most of the profits from their partnership. They claimed that the development and prosperity of the colonies were being held back in the interests of Europe, and that most of the colonial peoples continued to live in poverty. In India, *the Indian National Congress Party* had been agitating against British rule since 1885, while in south-east Asia, Vietnamese nationalists began to campaign against French rule during the 1920s. However, nationalism was not so strong in other areas, and progress towards independence would have been much slower without the boost provided by the Second World War. There is no doubt, however, that after the war the strength of nationalist feeling in many cases forced the colonial power to grant independence long before they had intended to do so. This often had disastrous results because the new states had not been properly prepared for independence. This was true of the British in Nigeria, the Belgians in the Congo and Rwanda-Urundi, the Spanish in Spanish Sahara and the Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola.

(b) Effects of the Second World War

The Second World War gave a great stimulus to nationalist movements in a number of ways:

- *Before the war, colonial peoples believed it would be impossible to defeat the militarily superior Europeans by force of arms.* Japanese successes in the early part of the war showed that it was possible for non-Europeans to defeat European armies. Japanese forces captured the British territories of Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong and Burma, the Dutch East Indies and French Indo-China. Although the Japanese were eventually defeated, the nationalists, many of whom had fought against the Japanese, had no intention of tamely accepting European rule again. After all, Britain, France and Holland had failed miserably to protect their subjects, thus destroying any claim to legitimacy they might have had. If necessary, nationalists would continue to fight against the Europeans, using the guerrilla tactics they had learned fighting the Japanese. This is exactly what happened in Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya and Burma.
- *Asians and Africans became more aware of social and political matters as a result of their involvement in the war.* Some 374 000 Africans were recruited into the British armed forces. The vast majority of them had never left their homeland before, and they were appalled at the contrast between the primitive living conditions in Africa and the relatively comfortable conditions they experienced even as members of the armed forces. Some Asian nationalist leaders worked with the Japanese, thinking that after the war there would be more chance of independence being granted by the Japanese than by the Europeans. Many of them, like Dr Sukarno in the Dutch East Indies, gained experience helping to govern the occupied areas. Sukarno later became the first president of Indonesia (1949).
- Some European policies during the war encouraged colonial peoples to expect independence as soon as the war was over. The Dutch government, shocked that people were so ready to co-operate with the Japanese in the East Indies, offered them some degree of independence as soon as the Japanese were defeated. *The 1941 Atlantic Charter* set out joint Anglo-American thinking about how the world should be organized after the war. *Two of the points mentioned were:*

  - Nations should not expand by taking territory from other nations.
  - All peoples should have the right to choose their own form of government. Though Churchill later said that this only applied to victims of Hitler's aggression, the hopes of Asian and African peoples had been raised.

- *The war weakened the European states*, so that in the end, they were not militarily or economically strong enough to hold on to their far-flung empires in the face of really determined campaigns for independence. The British were the first to recognize this because, as Bernard Porter pointed out:

  > The British Empire had always been a cheapskate affair. Governments had never wanted to spend money on it or commit more than the minimum of personnel to it, or trouble the British people with it too much. The best way to manage things was to devolve the ruling of colonial possessions (and the expense) to settlers, or local traditional rulers (chiefs). This had its advantages but it also diluted Britain's power.

  Consequently the British responded by giving independence to India (1947). After that, British policy was to delay independence as long as possible, but to give way when the pressure became irresistible. At the same time the British concentrated on making their withdrawals 'look good'. It was important to give the impression that they were in control of the process, that it was something that they had intended all along, and that they were not 'scuttling away'. It was a further ten years before the

Gold Coast became the first British territory in Africa to win independence; this became a great source of inspiration for other African colonies. As Iain Macleod (British Colonial Secretary) later put it: 'we could not possibly have held by force our territories in Africa; the march of men towards freedom cannot be halted; it can only be guided'. The French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese reacted differently and seemed determined to preserve their empires. But this involved them in costly military campaigns, and eventually they all had to admit defeat.

(c) Pan-Africanism

Early in the twentieth century there was an important development in African thinking which emphasized that all people of African descent, wherever they lived, were united by the same cultural and spiritual heritage. Pan-Africanism, as it became known, was first publicized by people of African origin living outside Africa. At the forefront were Marcus Garvey, a self-educated Jamaican who had founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and W. E. B. Du Bois, the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard. Gradually these ideas spread and by the end of the Second World War some African students, mainly from British colonies, had taken up pan-Africanism. Not only was it an encouragement to their ambitions of independence, it also inspired them to think beyond that. If all Africans shared the same social and cultural ties, it meant that the ultimate goal after independence must be to abandon the artificial frontiers set up by the Europeans and have a sort of federal United States of Africa along the same lines as the United States of America.

Kwame Nkrumah, who was to become the first prime minister of a semi-independent Gold Coast and then the first president of Ghana, was a strong believer in pan-Africanism. He wasted no time before organizing meetings and conferences of African leaders in which he pressed the advantages of African unification. Some states supported the idea, including Guinea, Mali and Morocco, but a majority were not impressed – having just won their independence, they saw little point in surrendering a large proportion of it by entering a huge political federation. Some of the other leaders suspected that Nkrumah was developing delusions of grandeur, seeing himself as the president of a federal Africa. Strongest in their opposition were Ethiopia and Liberia, which had been independent for generations, together with Nigeria, Sierra Leone and almost all the former French colonies. By 1963 the prospect of a United States of Africa had disappeared when a conference of African countries at Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) decided that the best way forward would be for them all to join an Organization of African Unity (OAU), a much less binding arrangement, while still displaying a sort of unity. But pan-Africanism had not been totally irrelevant – it had been an important influence on the rise of nationalist movements in many of the former colonies.

(d) Outside pressures

There were several outside pressures on the colonial powers to give up their empires. The USA, no doubt remembering that they had been the earliest part of the British Empire to declare independence (1776), was hostile to imperialism (building up empires and owning colonies). During the war, President Roosevelt made it clear that he took the Atlantic Charter to apply to all peoples, not just those taken over by the Germans. He and his successor, Truman, pressurized the British government to speed up independence for India. Peter Clarke points out that Churchill's imperialism irritated the Americans to such an extent that they were determined not to do anything that would help Britain to keep its empire. One reason given by the Americans for wanting to see the end of the European empires was that delays in

granting independence to European colonies in Asia and Africa would encourage the development of communism in those areas. While there was clearly some truth in this argument in the case of Asia, Bernard Porter was convinced that in the case of Africa, there was still comparatively little communist influence. More important was the fact that the Americans looked on the newly-independent nations as potential markets into which they could force their way and establish both economic and political influence. In the eyes of the USA, imperially protected markets gave the British and other Europeans an unfair advantage.

The United Nations Organization, under American influence, came out firmly against imperialism and demanded a step-by-step programme for decolonization. The USSR also added its voice to the chorus and constantly denounced imperialism. As well as putting the European states under pressure, this encouraged nationalists all over the world to intensify their campaigns.

Almost every case was different; the following sections will look at some of the different ways in which colonies and territories gained their independence.

24.2 INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

(a) Background to independence

The British had made some concessions to the Indian nationalists even before the Second World War. The Morley–Minto reforms (1909), the Montague–Chelmsford reforms (1919) and the Government of India Act (1935) all gave the Indians more say in the government of their country. The Indians were also promised 'dominion status' as soon as the war was over. This meant becoming more or less completely independent, though still acknowledging the British monarch as head of state, like Australia. The Labour government, newly elected in 1945, wanted to show that it disapproved of exploiting the Indians and was anxious to press ahead with independence, on both moral and economic grounds. Ernest Bevin, the foreign secretary, had earlier toyed with the idea of delaying independence for a few years to enable Britain to finance a development programme for India. This idea was dropped because the Indians would be suspicious of any delay, and because Britain could not afford the expense, given its own economic difficulties. Bevin and Clement Attlee, the prime minister, therefore decided to give India full independence, allowing the Indians to work out the details for themselves.

The reasons why the British decided to grant Indian independence have been the subject of lively debate. Official sources presented it as the culmination of a process going back to the Government of India Act of 1919 – a process by which the British carefully prepared India for independence. Some Indian historians, including Sumit Sarkar and Anita Inder Singh, have challenged this view, arguing that Indian independence was never a long-term goal of the British and that the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935 were designed not to prepare the way for independence but to postpone it. Independence was not a gift from the British, it was 'the hard-won fruit of struggle and sacrifice'. Other historians have suggested that India was no longer of any value to Britain: instead of being a source of profit, it was now a drain on British resources. The aim of the government was therefore to get out of India in a way that did not look too much like a humiliation, and that kept India within the British financial network and Commonwealth.

Some writers have taken a middle view. Howard Brasted defended the Labour government against accusations that it made its policy up as it went along, and ended up running away from the problem. He showed that the Labour Party had drawn up a clear policy of withdrawal from India *before* the Second World War, and this was discussed by the party

leader, Clement Attlee, and Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Congress leader, in 1938. Nehru and Gandhi knew that when Labour won the election of July 1945, Indian independence could not be far away. Sadly the progress towards independence turned out to be far more difficult than had been expected: the problems were so complex that the country ended up having to be divided into two states – India and Pakistan.

(b) Why was the partition of India necessary?

1 Religious hostility between Hindus and Muslims

This was the main problem. Hindus made up about two-thirds of the 400 million population, and the rest were mostly Muslims. After their victories in the 1937 elections when they won eight out of the eleven states, *the Hindu National Congress Party* unwisely called on *the Muslim League* to merge with Congress. This alarmed the Muslim League, who were afraid that an independent India would be dominated by Hindus. The Muslim leader, *M. A. Jinnah*, demanded *a separate Muslim state of Pakistan*, and adopted as his slogan 'Pakistan or Perish'.

2 Compromise attempts failed

Attempts to draw up a compromise solution acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims failed. The British proposed a federal scheme in which the central government would have only limited powers, while those of the provincial governments would be much greater. This would enable provinces with a Muslim majority to control their own affairs and there would be no need for a separate state. Both sides accepted the idea in principle but failed to agree on the details.

3 Violence broke out in August 1946

This began when the viceroy (the king's representative in India), Lord Wavell, invited the Congress leader, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, to form an interim government, still hoping that details could be worked out later. Nehru formed a cabinet which included two Muslims, but Jinnah was convinced that the Hindus could not be trusted to treat the Muslims fairly. He called for a day of 'direct action' in support of a separate Pakistan. Fierce rioting followed in Calcutta, where 5000 people were killed, and it soon spread to Bengal, where Muslims set about slaughtering Hindus. As Hindus retaliated, *the country seemed on the verge of civil war.*

4 Mountbatten decides on partition

The British government, realizing that they lacked the military strength to control the situation, announced early in 1947 *that they would leave India no later than June 1948*. The idea was to try to shock the Indians into adopting a more responsible attitude. *Lord Louis Mountbatten* was sent as the new viceroy, and he soon decided that partition was the only way to avoid civil war. He realized that there would probably be bloodshed whatever solution was tried, but felt that partition would produce less violence than if Britain tried to insist on the Muslims remaining part of India. Within six weeks Mountbatten had worked out a plan for dividing the country up and for the British withdrawal. This was accepted by Nehru and Jinnah, although *M. K. Gandhi*, known as the Mahatma (Great Soul), the other highly respected Congress leader, who believed in non-violence, was still hoping for a united India. Afraid that delay would cause more violence, Mountbatten brought the date for British withdrawal forward to August 1947.

Map 24.1 **India and Pakistan**

(c) How was partition carried out?

The Indian Independence Act was rushed through the British parliament (August 1947), separating the Muslim majority areas in the north-west and north-east from the rest of India to become the independent state of Pakistan. The new Pakistan unfortunately consisted of two separate areas over a thousand miles apart (see Map 24.1). Independence day for both India and Pakistan was 15 August 1947. Problems followed immediately:

- *It had been necessary to split the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal, which had mixed Hindu/Muslim populations*. This meant that millions of people found themselves on the wrong side of the new frontiers – Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan.
- *Afraid of being attacked, millions of people headed for the frontiers*, Muslims trying to get into Pakistan and Hindus into India. Clashes occurred which developed into near-hysterical mob violence, especially in the Punjab, where about 250 000 people were murdered. Violence was not quite so widespread in Bengal, where Gandhi, still preaching non-violence and toleration, managed to calm the situation.
- *Violence began to die down before the end of 1947, but in January 1948 Gandhi was shot dead by a Hindu fanatic* who detested his tolerance towards Muslims. It was a tragic end to a disastrous set of circumstances, but the shock somehow seemed to bring people to their senses, so that the new governments of India and Pakistan could begin to think about their other problems. From the British point of view, the government could claim that although so many deaths were regrettable,

the granting of independence to India and Pakistan was an act of far-sighted statesmanship. Attlee argued, with some justification, that Britain could not be blamed for the violence; this was due, he said, 'to the failure of the Indians to agree among themselves'. V. P. Menon, a distinguished Indian political observer, believed that Britain's decision to leave India 'not only touched the hearts and stirred the emotions of India … it earned for Britain universal respect and goodwill'. Howard Brasted agreed, pointing out that a less sensitive handling of the situation by the British government could have produced an even more catastrophic bloodbath. On the other hand, A. N. Wilson believes that there could have been less violence if Mountbatten had acted differently. He should have provided peacekeeping forces to protect the migrant populations, and he should have taken more care in deciding the frontiers. Wilson writes, perhaps a trifle unfairly: 'By his superficial haste, his sheer arrogance and his inattention to vital detail … Mountbatten was responsible for as many deaths as some of those who were hanged after the Nuremberg trials.'

- *In the longer term, Pakistan did not work well as a divided state*, and in 1971 East Pakistan broke away and became the independent state of Bangladesh.

24.3 THE WEST INDIES, MALAYA AND CYPRUS

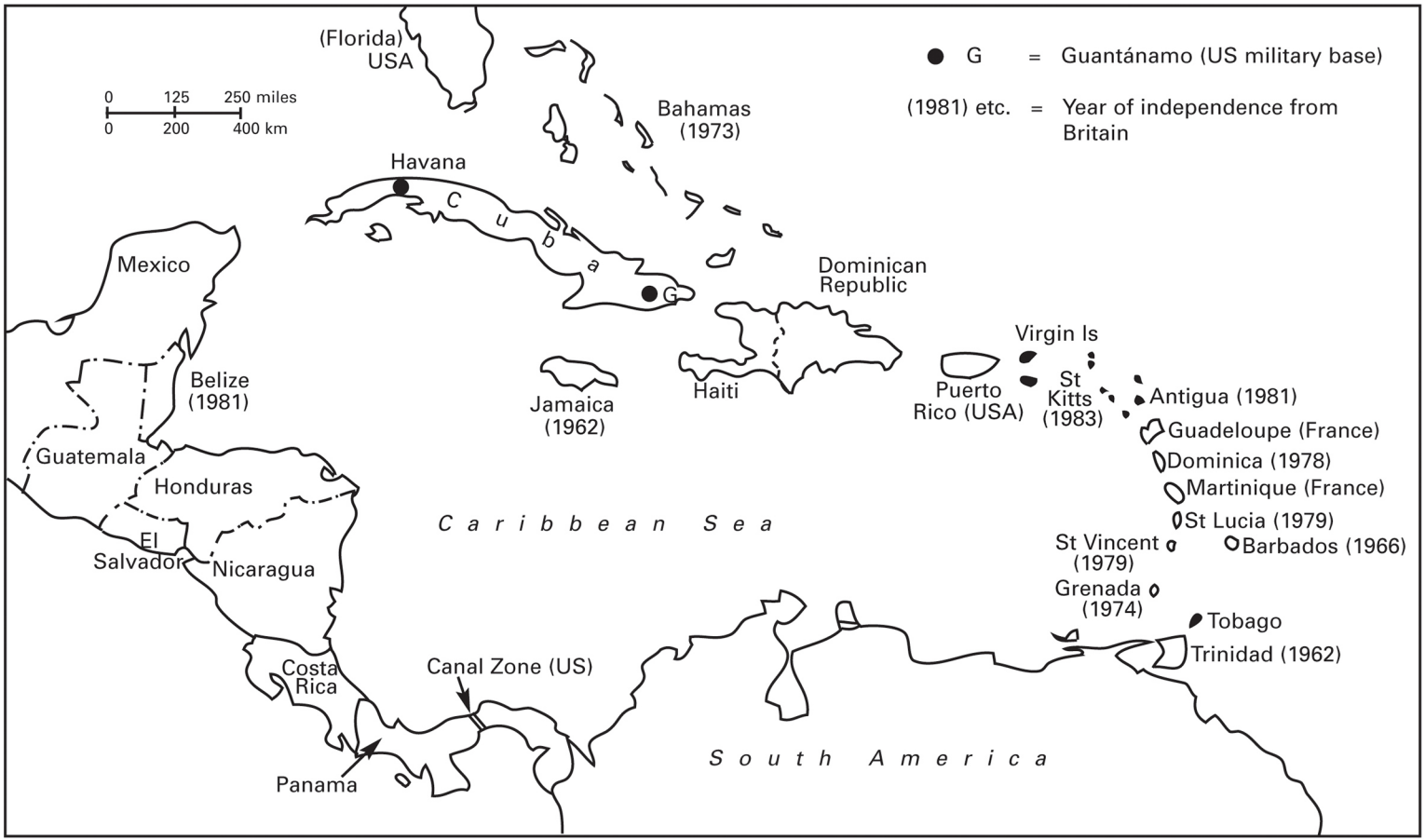
As these three territories moved towards independence, interesting experiments in setting up federations of states were tried, with varying degrees of success. A federation is where a number of states join together under a central or federal government which has overall authority; each of the states has its own separate parliament, which deals with internal affairs. This is the type of system which works well in the USA, Canada and Australia, and many people thought it would be suitable for the British West Indies and for Malaya and neighbouring British territories.

- *The West Indies Federation was the first one to be tried*, but it proved to be a failure: set up in 1958, it only survived until 1962.
- *The Federation of Malaysia*, set up in 1963, was much more successful.
- *The British handling of independence for Cyprus unfortunately was not a success* and the island had a troubled history after the Second World War.

(a) The West Indies

Britain's West Indian possessions consisted of a large assortment of islands in the Caribbean Sea (see Map 24.2); the largest were Jamaica and Trinidad, and others included Grenada, St Vincent, Barbados, St Lucia, Antigua, the Seychelles and the Bahamas. There were also British Honduras on the mainland of Central America and British Guiana on the north-east coast of South America. Together these territories had a population of around 6 million. Britain was prepared in principle to give them all independence, but there were problems.

- *Some of the islands were very small, and there were doubts about whether they were viable as independent states*. Grenada, St Vincent and Antigua, for example, had populations of only about 100 000 each, while some were even smaller: the twin islands of St Kitts and Nevis had only about 60 000 between them.
- *The British Labour government felt that a federation could be the ideal way of uniting such small and widely scattered territories, but many of the territories themselves objected*. Some, like Honduras and Guiana, wanted nothing to do with



Map 24.2 **Central America and the West Indies**

a federation, preferring completely separate independence. This left Jamaica and Trinidad worried about whether they would be able to cope with the problems of the smaller islands. Some islands did not like the prospect of being dominated by Jamaica and Trinidad, and some of the smallest were not even sure they wanted independence at all, preferring to remain under British guidance and protection.

Britain went ahead in spite of the difficulties and established the West Indies Federation in 1958 (excluding British Honduras and British Guiana). But it never really functioned successfully. The one thing they all had in common – a passionate commitment to cricket – was not enough to hold them together, and there were constant squabbles about how much each island should pay into the federal budget and how many representatives they should each have in the federal parliament. When Jamaica and Trinidad withdrew in 1961, the federation no longer seemed viable. In 1962 Britain decided to abandon it and grant independence separately to all those that wanted it. By 1983 all parts of the British West Indies, except a few tiny islands, had become independent. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were first, in 1962, and the islands of St Kitts and Nevis were last, in 1983. British Guiana became known as Guyana (1966) and British Honduras took the name Belize (1981). All of them became members of the British Commonwealth.

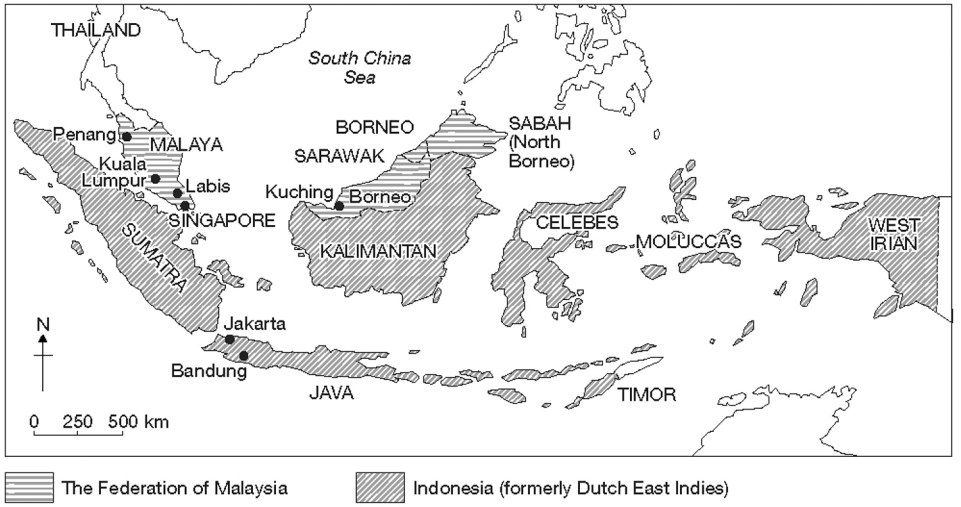
Ironically, having rejected the idea of a fully fledged federation, they soon found that there were economic benefits to be had from co-operation. The Caribbean Free Trade Association was set up in 1968, and this soon developed into *the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1973*, which all the former British West Indies territories (including Guyana and Belize) joined.

(b) Malaya

Malaya was liberated from Japanese occupation in 1945, but there were two difficult problems to be faced before the British were prepared to withdraw.

- *It was a complex area which would be difficult to organize.* It consisted of nine states each ruled by a sultan, two British settlements, Malacca and Penang, and Singapore, a small island less than a mile from the mainland. The population was multiracial: mostly Malays and Chinese, but with some Indians and Europeans as well. In preparation for independence it was decided to group the states and the settlements *into the Federation of Malaya (1948)*, while Singapore remained a separate colony. Each state had its own legislature for local affairs; the sultans retained some power, but the central government had firm overall control. All adults had the vote and this meant that the Malays, the largest group, usually dominated affairs.
- *Chinese communist guerrillas led by Chin Peng, who had played a leading role in the resistance to the Japanese, now began to stir up strikes and violence against the British*, in support of an independent communist state. The British decided to declare a state of emergency in 1948, and in the end they dealt with the communists successfully, though it took time, and the state of emergency remained in force until 1960. Their tactics were to resettle into specially guarded villages all Chinese suspected of helping the guerrillas. It was made clear that independence would follow as soon as the country was ready for it; this ensured that the Malays remained firmly pro-British and gave very little help to the communists, who were Chinese.

The move towards independence was accelerated when the Malay Party, under their able leader *Tunku Abdul Rahman*, joined forces with the main Chinese and Indian groups to form *the Alliance Party*, which won 51 out of the 52 seats in the 1955 elections. This



Map 24.3 **Malaysia and Indonesia**

seemed to suggest stability and the British were persuaded to grant full independence in 1957, when Malaya was admitted to the Commonwealth.

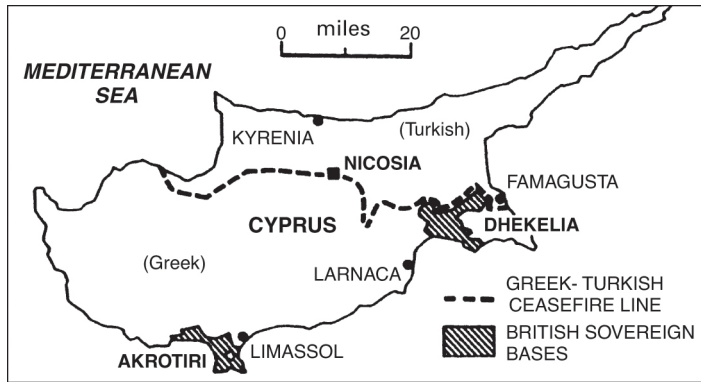
The Federation of Malaysia was set up in 1963. Malaya was running well under Tunku's leadership, and its economy, based on exports of rubber and tin, was the most prosperous in south-east Asia. In 1961, when the Tunku proposed that Singapore and three other British colonies, North Borneo (Sabah), Brunei and Sarawak, should join Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia, Britain agreed (see Map 24.3). After a United Nations investigation team reported that a large majority of the populations concerned was in favour of the union, the Federation of Malaysia was officially proclaimed (September 1963). Brunei decided not to join, and eventually became an independent state within the Commonwealth (1984). Although Singapore decided to leave the Federation to become an independent republic in 1965, the rest of the Federation continued successfully.

(c) Cyprus

The British Labour government (1945–51) considered giving Cyprus independence, but progress was delayed by complications, the most serious of which was the mixed population – about 80 per cent were Greek-speaking Christians of the Orthodox Church, while the rest were Muslims of Turkish origin. The Greek Cypriots wanted the island to unite with Greece (*enosis*), but the Turks were strongly opposed to this. Churchill's government (1951–5) inflamed the situation in 1954 when their plans for self-government allowed the Cypriots far less power than Labour had had in mind. There were hostile demonstrations, which were dispersed by British troops.

Sir Anthony Eden, Churchill's successor, decided to drop the idea of independence for Cyprus, believing that Britain needed the island as a military base to protect her interests in the Middle East. He announced that Cyprus must remain permanently British, though the Greek government promised that Britain could retain her military bases even if *enosis* took place.

The Greek Cypriots, led by *Archbishop Makarios*, pressed their demands, while a guerrilla organization called *Eoka*, led by General Grivas, waged a terrorist campaign



Map 24.4 **Cyprus divided**

against the British, who declared a state of emergency (1955) and deployed about 35 000 troops to try to keep order. British policy also involved deporting Makarios and executing terrorists. The situation became even more difficult in 1958 when the Turks set up a rival organization in support of dividing the island.

Eventually, to avoid possible civil war between the two groups, Harold Macmillan, Eden's successor, decided to compromise. He appointed the sympathetic and tactful Hugh Foot as governor and he negotiated a deal with Makarios:

- The Archbishop dropped *enosis* and in return Cyprus was granted full independence.
- Turkish interests were safeguarded, Britain retained two military bases and, along with Greece and Turkey, guaranteed the independence of Cyprus.
- Makarios became the first president with a Turkish Cypriot, Fazil Kutchuk, as vice-president (1960). It seemed the perfect solution.

Unfortunately it only lasted until 1963 when civil war broke out between Greeks and Turks. In 1974 Turkey sent troops to help establish a separate Turkish state in the north, and the island has remained divided since then (Map 24.4). Turks occupy the north (roughly one-third of the island's area) and Greeks the south, with UN troops keeping the peace between the two. Many attempts were made to find agreement, but all failed. In the mid-1980s the UN began to press the idea of a federation as the most likely way of reconciling the two states, but this solution was rejected by the Greeks (1987). In April 2003 the checkpoints along the frontier between the two states were opened so that both Greek and Turkish Cypriots could cross the partition line for the first time since 1974. The island was still divided in May 2004 when the Republic of Cyprus (Greek) joined the European Union. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus also voted to join, but since it was only recognized as an independent state by Turkey, it was not part of the accession agreement.

24.4 THE BRITISH LEAVE AFRICA

African nationalism spread rapidly after 1945; this was because more and more Africans were being educated in Britain and the USA, where they were made aware of racial discrimination. Colonialism was seen as the humiliation and exploitation of blacks by whites, and working-class Africans in the new towns were particularly receptive to nationalist ideas. The British, especially the Labour governments of 1945–51, were quite

willing to allow independence, and were confident that they would still be able to exercise influence through trade links, which they hoped to preserve by including the new states as members of the Commonwealth. This practice of exercising influence over former colonies after independence by economic means became known as *neo-colonialism*; it became widespread in most of the new states of the Third World. Even so, the British intended to move the colonies towards independence very gradually, and the African nationalists had to campaign vigorously and often violently to make them act more quickly.

The British colonies in Africa fell into three distinct groups, which had important differences in character that were to affect progress towards independence.

WEST AFRICA: Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia
Here there were relatively few Europeans, and they tended to be administrators rather than permanent settlers with profitable estates to defend. This made the move to independence comparatively straightforward.

EAST AFRICA: Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika
Here, especially in Kenya, things were complicated by the 'settler factor' – the presence of European and Asian settlers, who feared for their future under black governments.

CENTRAL AFRICA: Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia
Here, especially in Southern Rhodesia, the 'settler factor' was at its most serious. This was where European settlers were most firmly entrenched, owning huge and profitable estates, and confrontation between white settlers and African nationalists was most bitter.

(a) West Africa

1 The Gold Coast

The Gold Coast was the first black African state south of the Sahara to win independence after the Second World War, taking the name *Ghana (1957)*. It was achieved fairly smoothly, though not without some incident. The nationalist leader, Kwame Nkrumah, educated in London and the USA and since 1949 leader of *the Convention People's Party (CPP)*, organized the campaign for independence. There were boycotts of European goods, violent demonstrations and a general strike (1950), and Nkrumah and other leaders were imprisoned for a time. But the British, realizing that he had mass support, soon released him and agreed to allow a new constitution which included the vote for all adults; an elected Assembly; and an eleven-man Executive Council, of which eight were chosen by the Assembly.

In the 1951 elections, the first under the new constitution, the CPP won 34 seats out of 38. Nkrumah was released from prison, invited to form a government and became prime minister in 1952. This was self-government but not yet full independence. The Gold Coast had a small but well-educated group of politicians and other professionals, who, for the next five years, gained experience of government under British supervision. This

experience was unique to Ghana; had it been repeated in other newly independent states, it might possibly have helped to avoid chaos and mismanagement. In 1957 Ghana, as it became known, received full independence.

2 Nigeria

Nigeria was easily the largest of Britain's African colonies, with a population of over 60 million. It was a more difficult proposition than Ghana because of its great size, and because of its regional differences between the vast Muslim north, dominated by the Hausa and Fulani tribes, the western region (Yorubas) and the eastern region (Ibos). The leading nationalist was *Nnamdi Azikiwe*, popularly known to his supporters as 'Zik'. He was educated in the USA and for a time worked as a newspaper editor in the Gold Coast. After his return to Nigeria in 1937 he founded a series of newspapers and became involved in the nationalist movement, soon gaining enormous prestige. In 1945 he showed he meant business by organizing an impressive general strike, which was enough to prompt the British to begin preparing Nigeria for independence. It was decided that a federal system would be most suitable; in 1954 a new constitution introduced local assemblies for the three regions, with a central (federal) government in Lagos, the capital. The regions assumed self-government first and the country as a whole became independent in 1960. Sadly, in spite of the careful preparations for independence, tribal differences caused civil war to break out in 1967 when the Ibos declared the eastern region independent with the name *Biafra*.

The other two British colonies in West Africa achieved independence without serious incident – Sierra Leone in 1961 and the Gambia in 1965 (see Map 24.5).

(b) East Africa

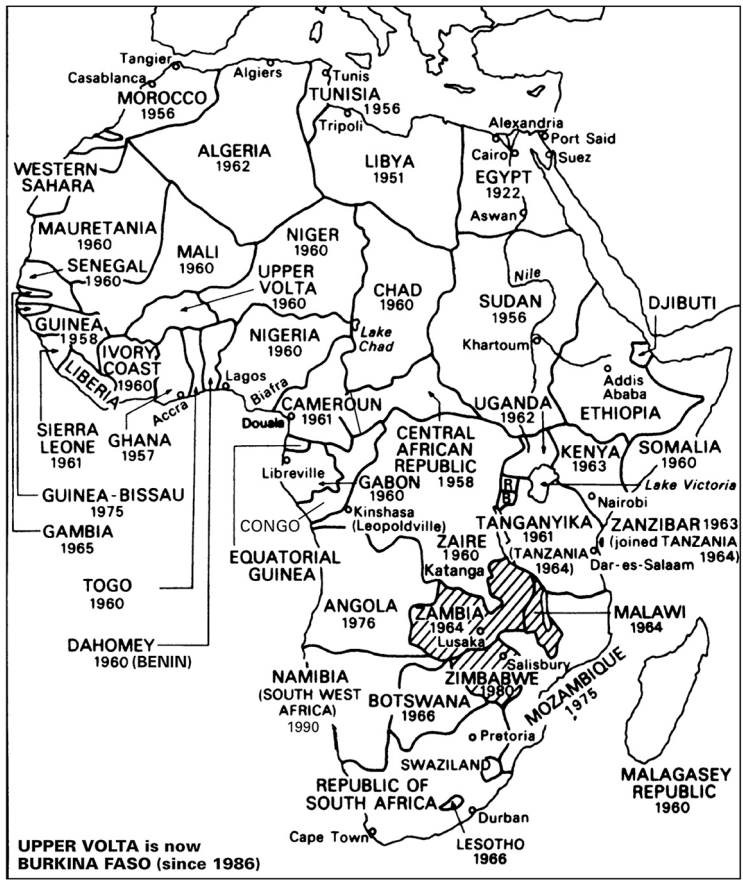
The British thought that independence for the colonies of East Africa was not so necessary as for West Africa, and that when independence did come, it would be in the form of multi-racial governments, in which the European and Asian settlers would play a significant part. But during Harold Macmillan's government (1957–63) *an important change took place in British policy towards both East and Central Africa*. Macmillan had come to realize the strength of black African nationalist feeling; in a famous speech in Cape Town in 1960, he said: 'the wind of change is blowing through the continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact, and our national policies must take account of it.'

1 Tanganyika

In Tanganyika the nationalist campaign was conducted by *the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU)* led by *Dr Julius Nyerere*, who had been educated at the University of Edinburgh. He insisted that the government must be African, but he also made it clear that whites had nothing to fear from black rule. Macmillan's government, impressed by Nyerere's ability and sincerity, conceded independence with black majority rule (1961). The island of Zanzibar was later united with Tanganyika, and the country took the name Tanzania (1964). Nyerere was president until his retirement in 1985.

2 Uganda

In Uganda independence was delayed for a time by tribal squabbles; the ruler (known as the kabaka) of the Buganda area objected to the introduction of democracy. Eventually a solution was found in a federal constitution which allowed the kabaka to retain some



Map 24.5 **Africa becomes independent**

powers in Buganda. Uganda itself became independent in 1962 with *Dr Milton Obote* as prime minister.

3 Kenya

Kenya was the most difficult area of East Africa to deal with because of the presence of a significant non-African population. As well as the 10 million Africans, there were some 66 000 white settlers who were violently opposed to black majority rule. There were also around 200 000 Indians and 35 000 Muslim Arabs. But it was the white settlers who had the political influence over the British government. They pointed out that they had worked hard and devoted their lives to making their farms successful, and that they now saw themselves as white Africans, and that Kenya was their homeland.

The main Kenyan African leader was *Jomo Kenyatta*; born in 1894, he was a member of the Kikuyu tribe and a veteran among African nationalists. He spent some time in Britain during the 1930s and returned to Kenya in 1947, becoming leader of the *Kenya African Unity Party (KAU)*, which consisted mostly of members of the dominant Kikuyu tribe. He hoped to win African majority rule gradually, first of all gaining more African seats on the Legislative Council. However, the more radical wing of his party – calling themselves the Forty Group – wanted to drive the British out by force, if necessary. The main African grievance was the land situation: the most fertile farming land was on the highland plateau, but only white settlers were allowed to farm there. Africans also resented the discrimination and the colour bar between blacks and whites, under which they were treated as inferior, second-class citizens. This was especially unacceptable, since many Africans had served in the army during the Second World War and had received equal treatment and respect from whites. Moreover it was clear that the whites expected to keep all their privileges even if they had to agree to independence.

The white settlers refused to negotiate with Kenyatta, and were determined to prolong their rule. They provoked a confrontation, hoping that violence would destroy the African Party. The British government was under pressure from both sides, and the white settlers were supported by certain big-business interests in Britain; even so, it did not handle the situation with much imagination. The KAU was able to make little progress, the only British concession being to allow six Africans to join the Legislative Council of 54 members.

In 1952, African impatience burst out in an uprising against the British, with attacks on European-owned farms and on black workers. It was organized by the *Mau Mau* secret society, whose members were mainly from the Kikuyu tribe. A state of emergency was declared (1952); Kenyatta and other nationalist leaders were arrested and found guilty of terrorism. Kenyatta was kept in jail for six years although he had publicly condemned violence and insisted that the KAU had not been involved in organizing the rebellion. In 1954 the British launched Operation Anvil in which 100 000 troops were deployed to flush out the terrorists (the Africans regarded themselves as freedom fighters, not terrorists).

There was a scandal in 1959 with revelations of brutal treatment of prisoners at the Hola detention camp, where savage beatings left 11 dead. However, the British government managed to hide from people at home the scale of what was going on in Kenya. It was only in 2005 that the full horrifying details were revealed in two separate books by historians David Anderson and Caroline Elkins. During the period of the emergency the British hanged more than a thousand Kikuyu, and killed some 20 000 in combat. In addition up to 100 000 died in detention camps, where there was a culture of brutality, routine beatings, killings and torture of the most grotesque kinds. One police chief later admitted that conditions in the camps were far worse than he had suffered as a prisoner of war in Japan. By contrast, less than a hundred whites were killed.

The uprising had been defeated by 1960, but by then, ironically, the British, encouraged by the 'wind of change' and by the expense of the anti-terrorist campaign, had changed their attitude. Harold Macmillan, who became prime minister in January 1957, faced up to the fact that it was impossible and indefensible to continue trying to prolong the privileged position of a group which made up no more than 5 per cent of the population. He decided to move Kenya towards independence. Africans were allowed to settle in the fertile highland plateau; restrictions were lifted on what the Kikuyus could grow, and as a result, coffee became one of the main crops. Attempts were made to increase the political role of the Africans; in 1957 elections were held for eight African seats in the Legislative Council, and the following year plans were announced to increase African membership of the council. In 1960 Africans became the majority group on the council and were given four out of ten seats in the Council of Ministers. In 1961 Kenyatta was at last released.

Progress towards independence was held up by rivalry and disagreement between the different tribal groups. While Kenyatta had been in prison, new leaders had emerged. *Tom*

Mboya and *Oginga Odinga*, both members of the second largest ethnic group, the Luo, formed *the Kenya African National Union (KANU)*, which largely succeeded in uniting the Kikuyus and Luos. When Kenyatta was freed, so great was his prestige that he was immediately recognized as leader of KANU; both Kikuyus and Luos co-operated well together, and they wanted a strong, centralized government which would be dominated by their tribes. However, there were a number of smaller tribes who did not relish the idea of being controlled by Kikuyus and Luos. Led by Ronald Ngala, they formed a rival party – *the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU)* – and they wanted a federal form of government which would enable them to have more control over their own affairs.

Both parties worked together to form a coalition government (1962), in preparation for elections to be held in May 1963. KANU won a clear majority in the elections and Kenyatta became prime minister of a self-governing Kenya. It was decided to abandon the idea of a federal system of government; Kenya became fully independent in December 1963. A year later it became a republic with Kenyatta as its first president and Odinga as vice-president. To his great credit, in spite of his harsh treatment by the British, Kenyatta favoured reconciliation; whites who decided to stay on after independence were fairly treated provided they took Kenyan citizenship, and Kenya became one of the most pro-British of the former colonies. Sadly, the tribal differences continued to cause problems after independence; the Luos believed that Kikuyus were receiving special treatment from the government and Kenyatta and Odinga fell out. Mboya was assassinated in 1969 and Odinga was sacked and spent two years in prison.

(c) Central Africa

This was the most troublesome area for Britain to deal with because this was where the settlers were most numerous and most deeply entrenched, particularly in Southern Rhodesia. Another problem was that numbers of well-educated Africans were much smaller than in West Africa because the settlers had ensured that very little money was spent on further and higher education for black Africans. Missionaries did their best to provide some education, but their efforts were often frustrated by the white governments. Alarmed at the spread of nationalism, the whites decided that their best policy was to combine resources. They persuaded Churchill's government (1953) to allow them to set up a union of the three colonies – Nyasaland and Northern and Southern Rhodesia, to be known as *the Central African Federation*. Their aim was to preserve the supremacy of the white minority (about 300 000 Europeans out of a total population of about 8.5 million). The federal parliament in Salisbury (the capital of Southern Rhodesia) was heavily weighted to favour the whites, who hoped that the federation would soon gain full independence from Britain, with dominion status.

The Africans watched with growing distrust, and their leaders, Dr Hastings Banda (Nyasaland), Kenneth Kaunda (Northern Rhodesia) and Joshua Nkomo (Southern Rhodesia), began to campaign for black majority rule. As violence developed, a state of emergency was declared in Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia, with mass arrests of Africans (1959). However, there was much support for the Africans in Britain, especially in the Labour Party, and the Conservative colonial secretary, Iain Macleod, was sympathetic. *The Monckton Commission (1960) recommended* votes for Africans, an end to racial discrimination and the right of territories to leave the Federation.

1 Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia

The British introduced new constitutions in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia which, in effect, allowed the Africans their own parliaments (1961–2). Both wanted to leave the

Federation, which was therefore terminated in December 1963, signalling defeat for the settlers. *The following year Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia became fully independent, taking the names Malawi and Zambia*.

2 Southern Rhodesia

Southern Rhodesia took much longer to deal with, and it was 1980 before the colony achieved independence with black majority rule. It was in Rhodesia, as it was now known, that the white settlers fought most fiercely to preserve their privileged position. There were fewer than 200 000 whites, about 20 000 Asians and 4 million black Africans, but *the Rhodesia Front*, a right-wing white racist party, was determined never to surrender control of the country to black African rule. The black African parties were banned.

When Zambia and Malawi were given independence, the whites assumed that Southern Rhodesia would get the same treatment, and put in a formal request for independence. The British Conservative government refused and made it clear that independence would be granted *only if the constitution was changed to allow black Africans at least a third of the seats in parliament*. Ian Smith (who became prime minister of Southern Rhodesia in April 1964) rejected this idea and refused to make any concessions. He argued that continued white rule was essential in view of the problems being faced by the new black governments in other African states, and because the Zimbabwe nationalists seemed bitterly divided. Harold Wilson, the new British Labour prime minister (1964–70), continued to refuse independence unless the constitution was changed to prepare for black majority rule. Since no compromise seemed possible, Smith declared Southern Rhodesia independent, against the wishes of Britain (a unilateral declaration of independence, or UDI), in November 1965.

There were mixed reactions to UDI

- *At first there seemed very little Britain could do about it*, once the government had decided not to use force against the illegal Smith regime. It was hoped to bring the country to its knees by economic sanctions, and Britain stopped buying sugar and tobacco from Rhodesia.
- *The UN condemned UDI* and called on all member states to place a complete trade embargo on Rhodesia.
- *South Africa, also ruled by a white minority government, and Portugal, which still controlled neighbouring Mozambique, were sympathetic to the Smith regime* and refused to obey the Security Council resolution. This meant that Rhodesia was able to continue trading through these countries. Many other countries, while publicly condemning UDI, privately evaded the embargo; the USA, for example, bought Rhodesian chrome because it was the cheapest available. Companies and businessmen in many countries, including British oil companies, continued to break sanctions, and although the Rhodesian economy suffered to some extent, it was not serious enough to topple the Smith regime.
- *The Commonwealth was seriously shaken.* Ghana and Nigeria wanted Britain to use force, and offered to supply troops. Zambia and Tanzania hoped that economic sanctions would suffice; relations with the British became extremely cool when it seemed that they were deliberately soft-pedalling sanctions, especially as Zambia was suffering more from them than Rhodesia. When Wilson twice met Smith (aboard HMS *Tiger* in 1966 and HMS *Fearless* in 1968) to put new proposals, there was a howl of protest in case he betrayed the black Rhodesians. Perhaps fortunately for the future of the Commonwealth, Smith rejected both sets of proposals.

- *The World Council of Churches* set up a programme to combat racism (1969), and this gave encouragement and support to the nationalists both morally and financially.

In 1970 Rhodesia declared itself a republic, and the rights of black citizens were gradually whittled away until they were suffering similar treatment to that experienced by blacks in South Africa. In 1976 the first signs began to appear that the whites would have to compromise. *Why did the whites give way?*

- *Mozambique's independence from Portugal (June 1975)* was a serious blow to Rhodesia. The new president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, applied economic sanctions and allowed Zimbabwean guerrillas to operate from Mozambique.
- *The 'front-line states'* – which included Zambia, Botswana and Tanzania, as well as Mozambique – *supported the armed struggle* and provided training camps for the resistance movement. Thousands of black guerrillas were soon active in Rhodesia, straining the white security forces to their limits and forcing Smith to hire foreign mercenaries.
- *The South Africans became less inclined to support Rhodesia* after their invasion of Angola (October 1975) had been called off on American orders. The Americans and South Africans were helping the rebel FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), which was trying to overthrow the ruling MPLA Party (People's Movement for Angolan Liberation), which had Russian and Cuban backing. The Americans were afraid that the USSR and Cuba might become involved in Rhodesia unless some compromise could be found; together with South Africa, they urged Smith to make concessions to the blacks before it was too late.
- *By 1978 nationalist guerrillas controlled large areas of the Rhodesian countryside*. Farming was adversely affected as white farmers were attacked; schools in rural areas were closed and sometimes burnt down. It became clear that the defeat of the whites was only a matter of time.

Smith still tried everything he knew to delay black majority rule as long as possible. He was able to present the divisions between the nationalist leaders as his excuse for the lack of progress, and this was a genuine problem:

- **ZAPU** (the Zimbabwe African People's Union) was the party of the veteran nationalist Joshua Nkomo.
- **ZANU** (the Zimbabwe African National Union) was the party of the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole.

These two, representing different tribes, seemed to be bitter enemies.

- **UANC** (the United African National Council) was the party of Bishop Abel Muzorewa.
- **Robert Mugabe**, leader of the guerrilla wing of ZANU, was another powerful figure, who eventually emerged as ZANU's unchallenged leader.

The divisions were reduced to some extent as a result of the 1976 Geneva Conference, when ZAPU and ZANU came together loosely in the Patriotic Front (PF). After this, the parties were referred to as **ZANU-PF** and **PF-ZAPU**.

Smith now tried to compromise by introducing his own scheme, a joint government of whites and UANC, the most moderate of the nationalist parties, with Bishop Muzorewa as prime minister. The country was to be called Zimbabwe/Rhodesia (April 1979). However, it was ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU which had mass support and they continued the

guerrilla war. Smith soon had to admit defeat and the British called *the Lancaster House Conference* in London (September–December 1979), which agreed the following points.

- There should be a new constitution which would allow the black majority to rule.
- In the new Republic of Zimbabwe, there would be a 100-seat parliament with 20 seats reserved for whites (uncontested). The remaining 80 MPs were to be elected, and it was expected that they would be black, since the vast majority of the population was black.
- Muzorewa would step down as prime minister and the guerrilla war would end.

In the elections which followed, Mugabe's ZANU won a sweeping victory, taking 57 out of the 80 black African seats. This gave him a comfortable overall majority, enabling him to become prime minister when Zimbabwe officially became independent in April 1980. The transference to black majority rule was welcomed by all African and Commonwealth leaders as a triumph of common sense and moderation. ZAPU and ZANU merged in 1987, when Mugabe became the country's first executive president. He was re-elected for a further term in March 1996, not without controversy, and was still clinging on to power in 2012, at the age of 87.

24.5 THE END OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE

The main French possessions at the end of the Second World War were:

- Syria in the Middle East, from which they withdrew in 1946;
- Guadeloupe and Martinique (islands in the West Indies);
- French Guiana (on the mainland of South America);
- Indo-China in south-east Asia;

together with huge areas of North and West Africa:

- Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria (together known as the Maghreb);
- French West Africa;
- French Equatorial Africa;
- the large island of Madagascar off the south-east coast of Africa.

The French began by trying to suppress all nationalist agitation, regarding it as high treason.

As the 1944 Brazzaville Declaration put it:

> The colonising work of France makes it impossible to accept any idea of autonomy for the colonies or any possibility of development outside the French Empire. Even at a distant date, there will be no self-government in the colonies.

But gradually the French were influenced by Britain's moves towards decolonization, and after their defeat in Indo-China in 1954, they too were forced to bow to the 'wind of change'.

(a) Indo-China

Before the war, the French had exercised direct rule over the area around Saigon and had protectorates over Annam, Tonkin, Cambodia and Laos. A protectorate was a country which was officially independent with its own ruler, but which was under the 'protection' or guardianship of the mother country. It usually meant, in practice, that the mother country, in this case France, controlled affairs in the protectorate just as it did in a colony.

During the war, the whole area was occupied by the Japanese, and resistance was organized by the communist *Ho Chi Minh and the League for Vietnamese Independence (Vietminh)*. When the Japanese withdrew in 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam independent. This was unacceptable to the French, and an eight-year armed struggle began which culminated in the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. The defeat was a humiliating blow for the French and it caused a political crisis. The government resigned and the new and more liberal premier Pierre Mendès-France, realizing that public opinion was turning against the war, decided to withdraw.

At the Geneva Conference (July 1954) it was agreed that Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia should become independent. Unfortunately this was not the end of the troubles. Although the French had withdrawn, the Americans were unwilling to allow the whole of Vietnam to come under the rule of the communist Ho Chi Minh, and an even more bloody struggle developed; there were also problems in Cambodia.

(b) Tunisia and Morocco

Both these areas were protectorates – Tunisia had a ruler known as the bey, and Morocco had a Muslim king, Mohammed V. But nationalists resented French control and had been campaigning for real independence since before the Second World War. The situation was complicated by the presence of large numbers of European settlers. Tunisia had about 250 000 and Morocco about 300 000 of these in 1945, and they were committed to maintaining the connection with France, which guaranteed their privileged position.

1 Tunisia

In Tunisia the main nationalist group was *the New Destour* led by Habib Bourghiba. They had widespread support among both rural dwellers and townspeople who believed independence would improve their living standards. A guerrilla campaign was launched against the French, who responded by banning New Destour and imprisoning Bourghiba (1952); 70 000 French troops were deployed against the guerrillas, but failed to crush them. The French became aware of a disturbing trend: with Bourghiba and other moderate leaders in jail, the guerrilla movement was becoming more left-wing and less willing to negotiate. Under pressure at the same time in Indo-China and Morocco, the French realized that they would have to give way. With a moderate like Bourghiba at the head of the country, there would be more chance of maintaining French influence after independence. He was released from jail and Mendès-France allowed him to form a government. In March 1956, Tunisia became fully independent under Bourghiba's leadership.

2 Morocco

In Morocco the pattern of events was remarkably similar. There was a nationalist party calling itself *Istiqlal (Independence)*, and King Mohammed himself seemed to be in the forefront of opposition to the French. The new trade unions also played an important role. The French deposed the king (1953), provoking violent demonstrations and a guerrilla

campaign. Faced with the prospect of yet another long and expensive anti-guerrilla war, the French decided to bow to the inevitable. The king was allowed to return and Morocco became independent in 1956.

(c) Algeria

It was here that the 'settler' factor had the most serious consequences. There were over a million French settlers (known as *pieds noirs*, 'black feet'), who controlled something like a third of all the most fertile land in Algeria, taken from the original Algerian owners during the century before 1940. The whites exported most of the crops they produced and also used some of the land to grow vines for winemaking; this meant there was less food available for the growing African population, whose standard of living was clearly falling. There was an active, though peaceful, nationalist movement led by Messali Hadj, but after almost ten years of campaigning following the end of the Second World War, they had achieved absolutely nothing.

- The French settlers would make no concessions whatsoever, continuing to dominate the economy with their large farms and treating the Algerians as second-class citizens. They firmly believed that fear of the full might of the French army would be enough to dissuade the nationalists from becoming violent.
- Algeria continued to be treated not as a colony or a protectorate, but as an extension or province of metropolitan France itself; but that did not mean that the 9 million Muslim Arab Algerians were treated as equals with ordinary French people. They were allowed no say in the government of their country. Responding to pressure, the French government allowed what appeared to be power-sharing. An Algerian assembly of 120 members was set up, though its powers were limited. But the voting was heavily weighted in favour of the Europeans: the million whites were allowed to vote for 60 members, while the other 60 were chosen by the 9 million Muslim population. Corruption on the part of the Europeans usually meant that they had a majority in the assembly.
- In spite of what had happened in Indo-China, Tunisia and Morocco, no French government dared consider independence for Algeria, since this would incur the wrath of the settlers and their supporters in France. Even Mendès-France declared: 'France without Algeria would be no France.'

Tragically, the stubbornness of the settlers and their refusal even to talk meant that the struggle would be decided by the extremists. Encouraged by the French defeat in Indo-China, a more militant nationalist group was formed – *the National Liberation Front (FLN), led by Ben Bella*, which launched a guerrilla war towards the end of 1954. At the same time, however, they promised that when they came to power, the *pieds noirs* would be treated fairly. On the other hand, the settlers were still confident that with the support of the French army they could overcome the guerrillas. The war gradually escalated as the French sent more forces. By 1960 they had 700 000 troops engaged in a massive anti-terrorist operation. *The war was having profound effects in France itself:*

- Many French politicians realized that even if the army won the military struggle, the FLN still had the support of most of the Algerian people, and while this lasted, *French control of Algeria could never be secure.*
- *The war split public opinion in France* between those who wanted to continue supporting the white settlers and those who thought the struggle was hopeless. At times feelings ran so high that France itself seemed on the verge of civil war.

- The French army, after its defeats in the Second World War and Indo-China, saw the Algerian war as a chance to restore its reputation and refused to contemplate surrender. Some generals were prepared to stage a military coup against any government that decided to give Algeria independence.
- In May 1958, suspecting that the government was about to give way, as it had in Tunisia and Morocco, Generals Massu and Salan organized demonstrations in Algiers and demanded that General de Gaulle should be called in to head a new government. They were convinced that the general, a great patriot, would never agree to Algerian independence. They began to put their plan – codenamed *Resurrection* – into operation, airlifting troops from Algiers into Paris, where it was intended that they should occupy government buildings. Civil war seemed imminent; the government could see no way out of the deadlock and consequently resigned. De Gaulle cleverly used the media to reinforce his case; he condemned the weakness of the Fourth Republic and its 'regime of the parties', which he claimed was incapable of dealing with the problem. Then, looking back to 1940, he said: 'Not so long ago, the country, in its hour of peril, trusted me to lead it to salvation. Today, with the trials that face it once again, it should know that I am ready to assume the powers of the Republic.'
- President Coty called upon de Gaulle, who agreed to become prime minister on condition that he could draw up a new constitution. This turned out to be *the end of the Fourth Republic*. Historians have had a great debate about the role of de Gaulle in all this. How much had he known about Resurrection? Had he or his supporters actually planned it themselves so that he could return to power? Was he simply using the situation in Algeria as a way of destroying the Fourth Republic, which he thought was weak? What does seem clear is that he knew about the plan and had dropped hints to Massu and Salan that if President Coty refused to allow him to take power, he would be happy for Resurrection to go ahead so that he could take power in that way.
- De Gaulle soon produced his new constitution, giving the president much more power, and he was elected president of the Fifth Republic (December 1958), a position he held until his resignation in April 1969. His enormous prestige was demonstrated when a referendum was held on the new constitution – in France itself, over 80 per cent voted in favour, while in Algeria, where Muslim Algerians were allowed to vote on equal terms with whites for the first time, over 76 per cent were in favour.

Having gained power, de Gaulle was now expected to deliver a solution. But how could he possibly achieve this when any attempt at compromise would be seen as total betrayal by the very people who had helped him to power? But de Gaulle was the great pragmatist. As the vicious fighting continued, with both sides committing atrocities, he must have realized that outright military victory was out of the question. He no doubt hoped that his popularity would enable him to force a settlement. When he showed a willingness to negotiate with the FLN, the army and the settlers were incensed; this was not what they had expected from him. Led by General Salan, they set up *l'Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS)* in *(1961)*, which began a terrorist campaign, blowing up buildings and murdering critics both in Algeria and in France. Several times they attempted to assassinate de Gaulle; in August 1962, after independence had been granted, he and his wife narrowly escaped death when their car was riddled with bullets. When it was announced that peace talks would begin at Evian, the OAS seized power in Algeria. This was going too far for most French people and for many of the army too. When de Gaulle appeared on television dressed in his full general's uniform and denounced the OAS, the army split, and the rebellion collapsed.

The French public was sick of the war and there was widespread approval when Ben Bella, who had been in prison since 1956, was released to attend peace talks at Evian.

It was agreed that Algeria should become independent in July 1962, and Ben Bella was elected as its first president the following year. About 800 000 settlers left the country and the new government took over most of their land and businesses. The aftermath of the struggle was savage. Algerian Muslims who had remained loyal to France, including some 200 000 who had served in the French army, were now denounced by the FLN as traitors. Nobody knows how many were executed or murdered, but some estimates put the total as high as 150 000. Some historians have criticized de Gaulle for his handling of the Algerian situation and for the enormous bloodshed that was caused. Of all the wars of independence waged against a colonial power, this was one of the most bloody. Yet, given the intransigence of the white settlers and the rebel elements of the army, and eventually that of the FLN, it is difficult to imagine any other politician who could have handled it any better. It may have been a flawed process, but arguably it was one that saved France from civil war.

(d) The rest of the French Empire

The French possessions in Africa south of the Sahara were:

- **French West Africa**, consisting of eight colonies: Dahomey, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mauretania, Niger, Senegal, Sudan and Upper Volta;
- **French Equatorial Africa**, consisting of four colonies: Chad, Gabon, Middle Congo and Oubangui-Shari;
- a third group consisting of **Cameroun** and **Togo** (former German colonies given to France to be looked after as mandates in 1919), and the island of **Madagascar**.

French policy after 1945 was to treat these territories as if they were part of France. Yet this was a sham, since the Africans were not treated on equal terms with Europeans, and any moves towards more privileges for the Africans were opposed by the French settlers. In 1949 the French government decided to clamp down on all nationalist movements, and many nationalist leaders and trade unionists were arrested. Often they were denounced as communist agitators, though without much evidence to support the accusations.

Gradually the French were forced by events in Indo-China and the Maghreb, together with the fact that Britain was preparing the Gold Coast and Nigeria for independence, to change their policy. *In 1956 the 12 colonies of West and Equatorial Africa were each given self-government for internal affairs, but they continued to press for full independence*.

When de Gaulle came to power in 1958 he proposed a new plan, hoping to keep as much control over the colonies as possible:

- the 12 colonies would continue to have self-government, each with its own parliament for local affairs;
- they would all be members of a new union, *the French Community*, and France would take all important decisions about taxation and foreign affairs;
- all members of the community would receive economic aid from France;
- there would be a referendum in each colony to decide whether the plan should be accepted or not;
- colonies opting for full independence could have it, but would receive no French aid.

De Gaulle was confident that none of them would dare face the future without French help. He was almost right: 11 colonies voted in favour of his plan, but one, *Guinea, under the leadership of Sékou Touré, returned a 95 per cent vote against the plan*. Guinea was given independence immediately (1958), but all French aid was stopped. However, Guinea's

brave stand encouraged the other 11, as well as Togo, Cameroun and Madagascar: they all demanded full independence and de Gaulle agreed. They all became independent republics during 1960. However, this new independence was not quite so complete as the new states had hoped: *de Gaulle was intent on neo-colonialism* – all the states except Guinea found that France still influenced their economic and foreign policies, and any independent action was almost out of the question.

Three French possessions outside Africa – Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana – were not given independence. They continued to be treated as extensions of the mother country and their official status was 'overseas départements' (a sort of county or province). Their peoples voted in French elections and their representatives sat in the French National Assembly in Paris.

24.6 THE NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND ITALY

All these colonial powers, with the exception of Italy, were, if anything, even more determined than France to hold on to their overseas possessions. This was probably because, being less wealthy than Britain and France, they lacked the resources to sustain neo-colonialism. There was no way that they would be able to maintain the equivalent of the British Commonwealth or the French influence over their former colonies, against competition from foreign capital.

(a) The Netherlands

Before the Second World War, the Netherlands had a huge empire in the East Indies including the large islands of Sumatra, Java and Celebes, West Irian (part of the island of New Guinea) and about two-thirds of the island of Borneo (see Map 24.3). They also owned some islands in the West Indies, and Surinam on the mainland of South America, between British and French Guiana.

It was in the valuable East Indies that the first challenge came to Dutch control, even before the war. The Dutch operated in a way similar to the French in Algeria – they grew crops for export and did very little to improve the living standards of the East Indians. Nationalist groups campaigned throughout the 1930s, and many leaders, including Ahmed Sukarno, were arrested. When the Japanese invaded in 1942, they released Sukarno and others and allowed them to play a part in the administration of the country, promising independence when the war was over. With the Japanese defeat in 1945, *Sukarno declared an independent Republic of Indonesia*, not expecting any resistance from the Dutch, who had been defeated and their country occupied by the Germans. However, Dutch troops soon arrived and made determined efforts to regain control. Although the Dutch had some success, the war dragged on, and they were still a long way from complete victory in 1949, when they at last decided to negotiate. *Reasons for their decision were the following.*

- The expense of the campaign was crippling for a small country like the Netherlands.
- Outright victory still seemed a long way off.
- They were under strong pressure from the UN to reach agreement.
- Other countries, including the USA and Australia, were pressing the Dutch to grant independence so that they could exert their influence in the area, once exclusive Dutch control ended.
- The Dutch hoped that by making concessions, they would be able to preserve the link between Holland and Indonesia and maintain some influence.

The Netherlands agreed to recognize the independence of the United States of Indonesia (1949) with Sukarno as president, but not including West Irian. Sukarno agreed to a Netherlands–Indonesia Union under the Dutch crown, and Dutch troops were withdrawn. However, the following year Sukarno broke away from the Union and began to pressurize the Dutch to hand over West Irian, seizing Dutch-owned property and expelling Europeans. Eventually in 1963, the Dutch gave way and allowed West Irian to become part of Indonesia.

Important developments took place in 1965 when Sukarno was overthrown in a right-wing military coup, apparently because he was thought to be too much under the influence of communist China and the Indonesian Communist Party – the largest communist party outside the USSR and China. The USA, operating via the CIA, was involved in the coup, because they did not like Sukarno's toleration of the Communist Party, or the way in which he was acting as leader of the non-aligned and anti-imperialist movements of the Third World. The Americans welcomed Sukarno's successor, General Suharto, who obligingly introduced what he called his 'New Order'. This involved a purge of communists, during which at least half a million people were murdered, and the Communist Party was broken. The regime had all the hallmarks of a brutal military dictatorship, but there were few protests from the West because, in the Cold War atmosphere, Suharto's anti-communist campaign was perfectly acceptable. Of the other Dutch possessions, Surinam was allowed to become an independent republic in 1975; the West Indian islands were treated as part of the Netherlands, though allowed some control over their internal affairs.

(b) Belgium

Belgian control of their African possessions, the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, ended in chaos, violence and civil war. *The Belgians thought that the best ways to preserve their control were as follows.*

- Denying the Africans any advanced education. This would prevent them from coming into contact with nationalist ideas and deprive them of an educated professional class who could lead them to independence.
- Using tribal rivalries to their advantage by playing off different tribes against each other. This worked well in the huge Congo, which contained about 150 tribes; men from one tribe would be used to keep order in another tribal area. In Ruanda-Urundi, the Belgians used the Tutsi tribe to help them control the other main tribal group, the Hutu.

In spite of all these efforts, nationalist ideas still began to filter in from neighbouring French and British colonies.

1 The Belgian Congo

The Belgians seemed taken by surprise when widespread rioting broke out (January 1959) in the capital of the Congo, Leopoldville. The crowds were protesting against unemployment and declining living standards, and disorder soon spread throughout the country.

The Belgians suddenly changed their policy and announced that the Congo could become independent in six months. This was inviting disaster: the Belgians' own policies meant that there was no experienced group of Africans to which power could be handed over; the Congolese had not been educated for professional jobs – there were only 17 graduates in the entire country, and there were no African doctors, lawyers, engineers or

officers in the army. *The Congolese National Movement (MNC),* led by *Patrice Lumumba*, had been in existence less than a year. The huge size of the country and the large number of tribes would make it difficult to govern. Six months was far too short a time to prepare for independence.

Why did the Belgians take this extraordinary decision?

- They were afraid of further bloodshed if they hesitated; there were over 100 000 Belgians in the country, who could be at risk.
- They did not want to face the expense of a long anti-guerrilla campaign like the one dragging on in Algeria.
- They hoped that granting independence immediately while the Congo was weak and divided would leave the new state completely helpless; it would be dependent on Belgium for support and advice, and so Belgian influence could be preserved.

The Congo became independent on 30 June 1960 with Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of a rival nationalist group, as president. Unfortunately everything went wrong shortly after independence and the country was plunged into a disastrous civil war. Order was not restored until 1964.

2 Ruanda-Urundi

The other Belgian territory, *Ruanda-Urundi*, was given independence in 1962 and divided into two states – Rwanda and Burundi, both governed by members of the Tutsi tribe, as they had been throughout the colonial period. Neither of the states had been properly prepared, and after independence, both had a very unsettled history of bitter rivalry and violence between the Tutsis and the Hutus.

(c) Spain

Spain owned some areas in Africa: the largest was Spanish Sahara, and there were also the small colonies of Spanish Morocco, Ifni and Spanish Guinea. General Franco, the right-wing dictator who ruled Spain from 1939 until 1975, showed little interest in the colonies.

- When nationalist movements developed, he did not resist long in the case of *Spanish Morocco*: when the French gave independence to French Morocco (1956), Franco followed suit and Spanish Morocco became part of Morocco. The other two small colonies had to wait much longer;
- *Ifni* was allowed to join Morocco, but not until 1969;
- *Guinea* became independent as Equatorial Guinea in 1968.

1 Spanish Sahara

Here Franco resisted even longer, because the country was a valuable source of phosphates. Only after Franco's death in 1975 did the new Spanish government agree to release Sahara. Unfortunately the process was badly bungled: instead of making it into an independent state ruled by its nationalist party, *the Polisario Front*, it was decided to divide it between its two neighbouring states, Morocco and Mauretania. The Polisario Front, under its leader, Mohamed Abdelazia, declared the Democratic Arab Republic of Sahara (1976), which was recognized by Algeria, Libya, the communist states and India. Algeria and Libya sent help and in 1979 Mauretania decided to withdraw, making it easier for Sahara to struggle on against Morocco. However, the fact that Sahara had

been officially recognized by the USSR was enough to arouse American suspicions. Just when it seemed that the Moroccans too were prepared to negotiate peace, the new American president, Ronald Reagan, encouraged them to continue the fight, stepping up aid to Morocco.

The war dragged on through the 1980s; yet another new Third World country had become a victim of superpower self-interest. In 1990 the UN proposed that a referendum should be held so that the people of Sahara could choose whether to be independent or become part of Morocco. Both sides signed a ceasefire, but the referendum was never held; during the 1990s the Polisario forces grew weaker as support was withdrawn by Algeria and Libya, mainly because they were preoccupied with their own problems. Sahara remained under Moroccan control and large numbers of Moroccan settlers began to move in. At the same time many Saharans, including Polisario fighters, moved out of the country and were forced to live in refugee camps in Algeria.

(d) Portugal

The main Portuguese possessions were in Africa: the two large areas of *Angola* and *Mozambique*, and the small West African colony of *Portuguese Guinea*. They also still owned the eastern half of the island of Timor in the East Indies. The right-wing Portuguese government of Dr Salazar blithely ignored nationalist developments in the rest of Africa, and for many years after 1945 the Portuguese colonies seemed quiet and resigned to their position. They were mainly agricultural; there were few industrial workers and the black populations were almost entirely illiterate. In 1956 there were only 50 Africans in the whole of Mozambique who had received any secondary education. Though nationalist groups were formed in all three colonies in 1956, they remained insignificant. *Several factors changed the situation.*

- By 1960 the nationalists were greatly encouraged by the large number of other African states winning independence.
- The Salazar regime, having learned nothing from the experiences of the other colonial powers, stepped up its repressive policies, but this only made the nationalists more resolute.
- Fighting broke out first in Angola (1961), where Agostinho Neto's *MPLA (People's Movement for Angolan Liberation)* was the main nationalist movement. Violence soon spread to Guinea, where Amilcar Cabral led the resistance, and to Mozambique, where the FRELIMO guerrillas were organized by Eduardo Mondlane.
- The nationalists, who all had strong Marxist connections, received economic and military aid from the Communist bloc.
- The Portuguese army found it impossible to suppress the nationalist guerrillas; the troops became demoralized and the cost escalated until by 1973 the government was spending 40 per cent of its budget fighting three colonial wars at once.
- Still the Portuguese government refused to abandon its policy; but public opinion and many army officers were sick of the wars, and in 1974 the Salazar dictatorship was overthrown by a military coup.

Soon all three colonies were granted independence: Guinea took the name Guinea-Bissau (September 1974) and Mozambique and Angola became independent the following year. This caused a serious crisis for Rhodesia and South Africa; they were now the only states left in Africa ruled by white minorities, and their governments felt increasingly threatened.

Now it was the turn of Angola to become a victim of outside interference and the Cold War. South African troops immediately invaded the country in support of UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), while General Mobutu of Zaire, with American backing, launched another invasion in support of the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola). The Americans thought that a joint Angolan government of these two groups would be more amenable and open to western influence than the Marxist MPLA. The MPLA received aid in the form of Russian weapons and a Cuban army; this enabled them to defeat both invasion forces by March 1976, and Neto was accepted as president of the new state. This proved to be only a temporary respite – further invasions followed and Angola was torn by civil war right through into the 1990s. The South Africans also interfered in Mozambique, sending raiding parties over the border and doing their best to destabilize the FRELIMO government. Again the country was torn by civil war for many years.

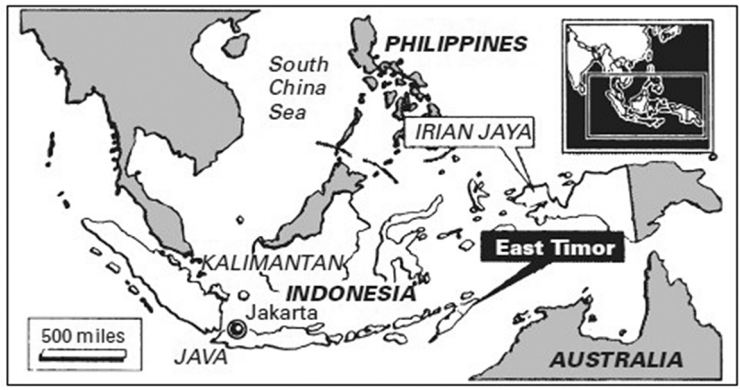
East Timor

One other Portuguese territory deserves mention: East Timor was half of a small island in the East Indies (see Map 24.6); the western half belonged to the Netherlands and became part of Indonesia in 1949. East Timor's nationalist movement (FRETILIN) won a short civil war against the ruling group, which wanted to stay with Portugal (September 1975). The USA denounced the new government as Marxist, which was not entirely accurate; after only a few weeks, Indonesian troops invaded, overthrew the government and incorporated East Timor into Indonesia, a sequence of events vividly described in Timothy Mo's novel *The Redundancy of Courage*. The USA continued to supply military goods to the Indonesians, who were guilty of appalling atrocities both during and after the war. It is estimated that about 100 000 people were killed (one-sixth of the population) while another 300 000 were put into detention camps.

FRETILIN continued to campaign for independence, but although the UN and the EU condemned Indonesia's action, East Timor was apparently too small and too unimportant, and the nationalists too left-wing to warrant any sanctions being applied against Indonesia by the West. The USA consistently defended Indonesia's claim to East Timor and played down the violence. In November 1991, for example, 271 people were killed in Dili, the capital, when Indonesian troops attacked a pro-independence demonstration. However, this incident helped to focus international attention on the campaign against Indonesian abuses of human rights and against US and UK arms sales to Indonesia. In 1996, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dili, Carlos Belo, and exiled FRETILIN spokesman, José Ramos-Horta, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of their long, non-violent campaign for independence.

By 1999, with international support for East Timor mounting, and the Cold War long since over, Indonesia at last began to give way and offered to allow a referendum on 'special autonomy' for East Timor. This was organized by the UN and took place in August 1999, resulting in an almost 80 per cent vote for complete independence from Indonesia. However, the pro-Indonesian minority did their best to sabotage the elections; as voting took place, their militia, backed by Indonesian troops, did everything they could to intimidate voters and throw the whole country into chaos. After the result was announced, they ran wild in a furious outburst of revenge and destruction, killing 2000 and leaving 250 000 homeless. Violence was only ended by the arrival of a large Australian peacekeeping force.

Two years later, in August 2001, when elections were held for the Constituent Assembly, the situation was much calmer. FRETILIN won by a large majority and their leader, Xanana Gusmao, was elected as the first president. In May 2002, East Timor



Map 24.6 **Indonesia and East Timor**

received international recognition as an independent state after a struggle lasting more than a quarter of a century.

(e) Italy

It was officially decided in 1947 that the Italians, having supported Hitler and suffered defeat in the Second World War, must lose their overseas empire. Their African possessions were to be administered by France and Britain until the UN decided what to do with them. The UN followed a policy of placing the territories under governments which would be sympathetic to western interests.

- *Ethiopia* was handed back to the rule of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who had been forced into exile when the Italians invaded Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in 1935.
- *Libya* was given independence under King Idris (1951).
- *Eritrea* was made part of Ethiopia (1952) but it was to have a large measure of self-government within a federal system.
- *Italian Somaliland* was merged with British Somaliland to form the independent state of Somalia (1960).

Some of these arrangements did not prove to be very successful. Both Idris and Selassie became unpopular with their peoples, Idris because he was thought to be too pro-West, and Selassie because he made no attempt to modernize Ethiopia and did little to improve the living standards of his people. He also made the mistake of cancelling Eritrea's rights of self-government (1962), which prompted the Eritreans into launching a war for independence. Idris was overthrown in 1969 by a socialist revolutionary movement, which nationalized the oil industry and began to modernize the country. Selassie was overthrown in 1974. New leaders soon emerged – Colonel Gaddafi in Libya and Colonel Mengistu in Ethiopia, both of whom turned to the USSR for economic aid. Mengistu seemed to have the more serious problems. He made the mistake of refusing to come to terms with the Eritreans and was faced with other provinces – Tigre and Ogaden – also wanting independence. As he struggled to suppress all these breakaway movements, military expenditure soared and his country sank into even deeper poverty and famine.

24.7 VERDICT ON DECOLONIZATION

Although some states, particularly Britain (with the exception of Kenya), handled decolonization better than others, in general it was not a pleasant experience for the colonies, and there was no simple happy ending. There were some gains for the new states, which now had much more control over what went on inside their frontiers; and there were some gains for ordinary people, such as advances in education and social services, and a political culture which allowed them to vote. However, it soon became fashionable to dismiss the entire colonial and imperial experience as a disaster, in which European nations, with supreme arrogance, imposed control over their subject peoples, exploited them ruthlessly and then withdrew unwillingly, leaving them impoverished and facing new problems. Piers Brendon points out that this was not really surprising, since 'the British Empire's real purpose was not to spread sweetness and light but to increase Britain's wealth and power. Naturally its coercive and exploitative nature must be disguised.' The same applied to other European empires, except perhaps that they were not as good as the British in disguising it. George Orwell remarked that empire was 'a despotism with theft as its final object'. Bertrand Russell called the British Empire 'a cesspool for British moral refuse', by which he apparently meant that many of the British administrators and officials were racist bullies.

There is plenty of evidence to support this negative view of colonialism. Although by no means all officials were racist bullies, there is no doubt that most of them treated the native peoples with arrogance, and considered them to be inferior beings or lesser breeds. After the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the army vowed to spill 'barrels and barrels of the filth that flows in these niggers' veins for every drop of blood' that they had shed. Piers Brendon shows that 'the history of India is punctuated by famines which caused tens of millions of deaths'. During a severe famine in Bengal in 1942–3, Churchill refused to divert shipping to take food supplies to Calcutta. The result – over 3 million people died from starvation. Much more can be added to the debit list: the slaughter of thousands of Aborigines in Australia and Maoris in New Zealand; during the Boer War (1899–1902) in South Africa, the British set up concentration camps in which about one-sixth of the entire Boer population died. Whenever there was any resistance, retribution was usually swift and disproportionate: Afghanistan, Ceylon, Jamaica, Burma, Kenya and Iraq were all ruthlessly subjugated. One of the latest historians to pronounce on imperialism is Richard Gott, in his book *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (2012). He goes along with what is probably the majority view, presenting a long catalogue of crimes against humanity committed by British imperialists: slavery, famine, prison, repression, battles, massacre, devastation and extermination; it makes depressing reading.

What about the supposed benefits that imperialism was claimed to have brought? The evidence suggests that, at best, these were thinly spread.

- *Neo-colonialism* meant that western European countries and the USA still exerted a great deal of control over the new states, which continued to need the markets and the investment that the West could provide.
- *Many new states, especially in Africa, had been badly prepared or not prepared at all for independence*. Their frontiers were often artificial ones forced on them by the Europeans and there was little incentive for different tribes to stay together. In Nigeria and the Belgian Congo, tribal differences helped to cause civil war. When the British withdrew from Nyasaland (Malawi) there were only three secondary schools for 3 million Africans, and not one single industrial factory. When the Portuguese were forced to withdraw from Mozambique, they deliberately destroyed installations and machinery in revenge.

- Although the people of the newly independent states were now able to vote, *in most cases, the governments which took over were run by the local political elite groups*. There was no social revolution and no guarantee that ordinary people would be any better off. Many historians, including Ellen M. Wood, have pointed out that their new political rights and citizenship were essentially passive. People were allowed to vote from time to time, but in practice it hardly made any difference to the way the country was run. 'The whole point of this strategy', she writes, 'is to put formal political rights in place of social rights, and to put as much of social life as possible out of the reach of democratic accountability.'

  In countries where new governments *were* prepared to introduce socialist policies (nationalizing resources or foreign businesses), or where governments showed any sign of being pro-communist, the western countries disapproved. They often responded by cutting off aid or helping to destabilize the government, and in some cases, even overthrowing governments. This happened in Indo-China, Indonesia, East Timor, Chad, Angola, Mozambique, Zaire and Jamaica. For example, in 1974 when Portugal withdrew from East Timor, the indigenous population opted to become independent. But the Indonesian leader, General Suharto, claimed East Timor for Indonesia. The leading political party in East Timor, known as FRETILIN, was thought to be Marxist, so that an independent East Timor might have socialist or even communist leanings. Consequently US president Gerald Ford gave Suharto the go-ahead: Indonesian troops move into East Timor to force the people to submit to Indonesian rule. They resisted stoutly, and there was a long campaign of terror in which around 200 000 people were killed out of a total population of only 700 000. Only in 1999 did the UN intervene and helped East Timor to gain its independence. Similar Cold War interventions took place in many countries in Central and South America which had gained their independence much earlier, in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 26).
- *All the Third World states faced intense poverty*. They were economically underdeveloped and often relied on exports of only one or two commodities; a fall in the world price of their product was a major disaster. Loans from abroad left them heavily in debt. As usual, Africa was worst hit: it was the only area of the world where, in 1987, incomes were on average lower than in 1972.

On the other hand, in 2003, historian Niall Ferguson brought out a strong defence of the British Empire and its legacy. While admitting that Britain's record as a colonial power was not without blemish, he argued that the benefits of British rule were considerable. In the nineteenth century the British 'pioneered free trade, free capital movements and, with the abolition of slavery, free labour'. In addition they developed a global network of modern communications, spread a system of law and order and 'maintained a global peace unmatched before or since'. When the Empire came to an end, the former British territories were left with the successful structures of liberal capitalism, the institutions of parliamentary democracy and the English language, which today is a vitally important medium of global communication. 'What the British Empire proved', Ferguson concludes controversially, 'is that empire is a form of international government which can work – and not just for the benefit of the ruling power. It sought to globalize not just an economic but a legal and ultimately a political system too.'

In conclusion, it seems fair to say that so many limitations were placed on the independence given to the former colonies after the Second World War that the result was to divide people's political rights from any chance of expressing their rights in social and economic affairs. True, they were now able to vote, but this did not necessarily enable them to improve their standards of living, since governments were still dominated by wealthy privileged elites. Canadian historian Anthony J. Hall calls this 'the great betrayal

of humanity's democratic promise'. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the newly independent Ghana, described it well in his book *Neo-Colonialism.* Criticizing the growing power of global capitalism, he wrote: 'For those who practise neo-colonialism, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress.' In 1946 there were 74 nation-states on the planet; in 1995, thanks to decolonization, the number had risen to 192. In the words of Anthony J. Hall:

> There was much unevenness, however, in the outcomes from this process of decolonization. Indeed the evidence is overwhelming that the frontier expansions of global corporations, along with the exercise of coercive authority centred in the military–industrial complex of the United States, intensifies the disparities of wealth and power that continue to reside at the very core in its most essential sense. Class exploitation and colonial exploitation are two sides of the same coin … [it all tends] to favour the interests of small, local oligarchies rather than to deliver on the ideals of broad-ranging liberation that the winds of change seemed initially to promise.

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Chapter

25 Africa since independence

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

After achieving independence, the new African nations faced similar problems. It is not possible in the limited space available to look at events in every state in Africa. The following sections examine the problems common to all the states, and show what happened in some of the countries which experienced one or more of these problems. For example:

- *Ghana* suffered economic problems, the failure of democracy and several coups.
- *Nigeria* experienced civil war, a succession of military coups and brutal military dictatorship.
- *Tanzania* – extreme poverty.
- *The Congo* – civil war and military dictatorship.
- *Angola* – civil war prolonged by outside interference.
- *Burundi and Rwanda* – civil war and horrifying tribal slaughter.
- *South Africa* was a special case: after 1980, when Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) gained its independence, South Africa was the last bastion of white rule on the continent of Africa, and the white minority was determined to hold out to the bitter end against black nationalism. Gradually the pressures became too much for the white minority, and in May 1994 Nelson Mandela became the first black president of South Africa.
- *Liberia*, *Ethiopia*, *Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe* also had their own special problems.
- In the mid-1980s most of the countries of Africa began to experience HIV/AIDS, which by 2004 had reached pandemic proportions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Some 28 million people – about 8 per cent of the population – were HIV-positive.

25.1 ISSUES COMMON TO THE AFRICAN STATES

(a) Tribal differences

They each contained a number of different tribes which had only been held together by the foreign colonial rulers and which had united in the nationalist struggle for freedom from the foreigners. As soon as the Europeans withdrew, there was little incentive to stay together, and they tended to regard loyalty to the tribe as more important than loyalty to their new nation. In Nigeria, the Congo (Zaire), Burundi and Rwanda, tribal differences became so intense that they led to civil war.

(b) They were economically under-developed

In this, they were like many other Third World states. Most African states had very little industry; this had been a deliberate policy by the colonial powers, so that Africans would

have to buy manufactured goods from Europe or the USA; the role of the colonies had been to provide food and raw materials. After independence they often relied on only one or two commodities for export, so that a fall in the world price of their products was a major disaster. Nigeria, for example, relied heavily on its oil exports, which produced about 80 per cent of its annual income. There was a shortage of capital and skills of all kinds, and the population was growing at a rate of over 2 per cent a year. Loans from abroad left them heavily in debt, and as they concentrated on increasing exports to pay for the loans, food for home consumption became scarcer. All this left the African nations heavily dependent on western European countries and the USA for both markets and investment and enabled those countries to exert some control over African governments (neo-colonialism). In the atmosphere of the Cold War, some states suffered direct military intervention from countries which did not like their government, usually because they were thought to be too left-wing and under Soviet influence. This happened to Angola, which found itself invaded by troops from South Africa and Zaire because those countries disapproved of Angola's Marxist-style government.

(c) Political problems

African politicians lacked experience of how to work the systems of parliamentary democracy left behind by the Europeans. Faced with difficult problems, they often failed to cope, and governments became corrupt. Most African leaders who had taken part in guerrilla campaigns before independence had been influenced by Marxist ideas, which often led them to set up one-party states as the only way to achieve progress. In many states, such as Kenya and Tanzania, this worked well, providing stable and effective government. On the other hand, since it was impossible to oppose such governments by legal means, violence was the only answer. Military coups to remove unpopular rulers became common. President Nkrumah of Ghana, for example, was removed by the army in 1966 after two assassination attempts had failed. Where the army was unable or unwilling to stage a coup, such as in Malawi, the one-party system flourished at the expense of freedom and genuine democracy.

(d) Economic and natural disasters

In the 1980s the whole of Africa was beset by economic and natural disasters. The world recession reduced demand for African exports such as oil, copper and cobalt, and there was a severe drought (1982–5) which caused crop failures, deaths of livestock, famine and starvation. The drought ended in 1986 and much of the continent had record harvests that year. However, by this time, Africa, like the rest of the world, was suffering from a severe debt crisis, and at the same time had been forced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to economize drastically in return for further loans. In a number of cases the IMF prescribed the ESAP (Economic Structural Adjustment Programme) which the country had to follow. Often this forced them to devalue their currency, and reduce food price subsidies, which led to increased food prices at a time when unemployment was rising and wages were falling. Governments were also forced to cut their spending on education, health and social services as part of the austerity programme. Table 26.2 in the next chapter shows how poor most of the African states were in comparison with the rest of the world.

25.2 GHANA

Kwame Nkrumah ruled Ghana from the time the country gained independence in 1957 until his removal by the army in 1966.

(a) His initial achievements were impressive

He was a socialist in outlook and wanted his people to enjoy a higher standard of living, which would come from efficient organization and industrialization. Production of cocoa (Ghana's main export) doubled, forestry, fishing and cattle-breeding expanded, and the country's modest deposits of gold and bauxite were more effectively exploited. The building of a dam on the River Volta (begun 1961) provided water for irrigation and hydro-electric power, producing enough electricity for the towns as well as for a new plant for smelting Ghana's large deposits of bauxite. Government money was provided for village projects in which local people built roads and schools.

Nkrumah also gained prestige internationally: he strongly supported *the pan-African movement*, believing that only through a federation of the whole continent could African power make itself felt. As a start, an economic union was formed with Guinea and Mali, though nothing much came of it, while his dream of an African federal state quickly faded. He supported *the Organization of African Unity* (set up in 1963), and usually played a responsible role in world affairs, keeping Ghana in the Commonwealth; in 1961 Queen Elizabeth II made a state visit to Ghana. At the same time Nkrumah forged links with the USSR, East Germany and China.

(b) Why was Nkrumah overthrown?

He tried to introduce industrialization too quickly and borrowed vast amounts of capital from abroad, hoping to balance the budget from increased exports. Unfortunately Ghana was still uncomfortably dependent on cocoa exports, and a steep fall in the world price of cocoa left her with a huge balance-of-payments deficit. The smelting plant was a disappointment because the American corporation that built and owned it insisted on buying bauxite from abroad instead of using Ghanaian bauxite. There was criticism that too much money was being wasted on unnecessary projects, like the ten-mile stretch of motorway from Accra (the capital) to Tema, and some grandiose building projects.

Probably the most important reason for his downfall was that he gradually began to abandon parliamentary government in favour of a one-party state and personal dictatorship. He justified this on the grounds that the opposition parties, which were based on tribal differences, were not constructive and merely wanted more power in their own areas. They had no experience of working a parliamentary system, and as Nkrumah himself wrote: 'Even a system based on a democratic constitution may need backing up in the period following independence by emergency measures of a totalitarian kind.'

From 1959 onwards, opponents could be deported or imprisoned for up to five years without trial. Even the respected opposition leader, J. B. Danqua, was arrested in 1961 and died in prison. In 1964 all parties except Nkrumah's were banned, and even within his own party no criticism was allowed. He began to build up the image of himself as the 'father of the nation'. Slogans such as 'Nkrumah is our Messiah, Nkrumah never dies' were circulated, and numerous statues of the 'saviour' were erected. This struck many people as absurd, but Nkrumah justified it on the grounds that the population could identify itself better with a single personality as leader than with vague notions of the state. All this, plus the fact that he was believed to have amassed a personal fortune through corruption, was too much for the army, which seized control when Nkrumah was on a visit to China (1966). The American CIA gave the coup its full backing, because the USA disapproved of Nkrumah's links with communist states.

The military government promised a return to democracy as soon as a new constitution could be drawn up, complete with safeguards against a return to dictatorship. The

constitution was ready in 1969 and the elections returned Dr Kofi Busia, leader of the Progressive Party, as the new prime Minister (October 1969).

(c) Kofi Busia

Dr Busia survived only until January 1972 when he too was overthrown by the army. An academic who had studied economics at Oxford, Busia illustrates perfectly the difficulties of democratically elected politicians trying to maintain political stability in the African situation. In power in the first place only by permission of the army, he had to produce quick results. Yet the problems were enormous – rising unemployment, rising prices, the low price of cocoa on the world market, and massive debts to be repaid. Canada and the USA were prepared to wait for repayment, but other countries, including Britain, were not so sympathetic. Busia, who had a reputation for honesty, genuinely tried to keep up payments, but these were using up about 40 per cent of Ghana's export profits. In 1971 imports were limited and the currency was devalued by nearly 50 per cent. Busia was hampered by the tribal squabbles which re-emerged under conditions of democracy, and the economic situation deteriorated so rapidly that in January 1972, while he was away on a visit to London, the army announced that he had been replaced by a National Redemption Council under the leadership of Colonel Ignatius Acheampong. They too struggled with all the same problems, exacerbated by sharp rises in the price of oil and other imports.

(d) J. J. Rawlings

As Ghana continued to flounder amid her economic problems, Acheampong was himself removed from power by General Fred Akuffo, for alleged corruption. In June 1979, a group of junior officers led by 32-year-old Jerry J. Rawlings, a charismatic air-force officer of mixed Ghanaian and Scottish parentage, seized power on the grounds that corrupt soldiers and politicians needed to be weeded out before a return to democracy. They launched what was described as a 'house-cleaning' exercise in which Acheampong and Akuffo were executed after secret trials. In July, elections were held as a result of which Rawlings returned Ghana to civilian rule with Dr Hilla Limann as president (September 1979).

Limann was no more successful than previous leaders in halting Ghana's economic decline. Corruption was still rife at all levels, and smuggling and hoarding of basic goods were commonplace. During 1981, inflation was running at 125 per cent, and there was widespread labour unrest as wages remained low. Rawlings came to the conclusion that he and some of his associates could do better. Limann was removed in a military coup (December 1981), and Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings became chairman of a Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). He was rare among military leaders: the army did not want power, he said, but simply to be 'part of the decision-making process' which would change Ghana's whole economic and social system. Though Rawlings remained leader, the PNDC appointed a civilian government of well-known figures from political and academic circles. Ghana suffered badly from the drought in 1983, but there was ample rainfall in 1984, bringing a good maize harvest.

Reluctantly Rawlings turned to the IMF for help, and though he had to agree to their conditions (austerity measures had to be introduced), the new recovery programme soon seemed to be working. Production rose by 7 per cent, and early in 1985 inflation was down to 40 per cent. As Ghana celebrated 30 years of independence (March 1987), she was still on course for recovery, and Rawlings and his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), evoking memories of Nkrumah, were running an apparently successful campaign to unite the 12 million Ghanaians solidly behind them. In the early 1990s, Ghana

was enjoying one of the highest economic growth rates in Africa. Yet for many people there remained one big criticism: there was no progress towards representative democracy. Rawlings responded in 1991 by calling an assembly to draw up a new constitution, and promised democratic elections in 1992. These duly went ahead (November) and Rawlings himself was elected president for a four-year term, with over 58 per cent of the votes. He was both Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. He was re-elected in 1996, but the constitution did not allow him to stand again in 2000. His career had been a remarkable one; seizing power in 1981 at the age of only 36, he remained leader for some 20 years, and gave Ghana a long period of political stability and modest prosperity.

The NDC chose Vice-President J. E. A. Mills as its presidential candidate. His main opponent was John Kufuor, leader of the New Patriotic Party. Mills was expected to win, but Kufuor scored a surprise victory and took over as president in January 2001. The NDC defeat was probably caused by economic problems – there had been a fall in the world prices of cocoa and gold, which were Ghana's two main exports – and by the fact that the popular J. J. Rawlings was no longer the candidate. Kufuor continued the stability and prosperity, and in 2002 he set up a National Reconciliation Commission. He was re-elected in 2004 and remained president until the next election, in December 2008. He concentrated on diversifying Ghana's economy, modernizing agriculture and infrastructure, and encouraging private involvement. Social conditions were improved and the National Health System was reformed. In 2005 the Ghana School Feeding Programme was started – this provided a free hot meal a day for schoolchildren in the poorest areas.

Ghana continued to be regarded as one of the most stable, prosperous and generally successful democracies in the whole of Africa. Kufuor's policies won the approval of the western countries and the US Millennium Challenge Account awarded Ghana a record $500 million grant for economic development. However, Kufuor was not without his critics among whom J. J. Rawlings was prominent. The complaints were that some projects had not been carried through fully and some had been underfunded or not funded at all. In the 2008 elections the NDC candidate, J. E. A. Mills, won the narrowest of victories.

25.3 NIGERIA

Superficially, Nigeria, which gained independence in 1960, seemed to have advantages over Ghana; it was potentially a wealthy state, extensive oil resources having been discovered in the eastern coastal area. The prime minister was the capable and moderate Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, assisted by the veteran nationalist leader Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was made president when Nigeria became a republic in 1963. However, in 1966 the government was overthrown by a military coup, and the following year civil war broke out and lasted until 1970.

(a) What caused the civil war?

A combination of the problems mentioned in Section 25.1 led to the outbreak.

- Nigeria's tribal differences were more serious than Ghana's, and although the constitution was a federal one, in which each of the three regions (north, east and west) had its own local government, the regions felt that the central government in Lagos did not safeguard their interests sufficiently. Balewa came from the Muslim north where the Hausa and Fulani tribes were powerful; the Yorubas of the west and the Ibos of the south and east were constantly complaining about northern domination, even though Azikiwe was an Ibo.

- To make matters worse there was an economic recession. By 1964 prices had risen by 15 per cent, unemployment was rising and wages were, on average, well below what had been calculated as the minimum living wage. Criticism of the government mounted and Balewa replied by arresting Chief Awolowo, prime minister of the western region, which for a time seemed likely to break away from the federation. The central government was also accused of corruption after blatantly trying to 'fix' the results of the 1964 elections.
- In January 1966 there was a military coup carried out by mainly Ibo officers, in which Balewa and some other leading politicians were killed. After this the situation deteriorated steadily: in the north there were savage massacres of Ibos, who had moved into the region for better jobs. The new leader, General Ironsi, himself an Ibo, was murdered by northern soldiers. When a northerner, Colonel Yakubu Gowon, emerged supreme, almost all the Ibos fled from other parts of Nigeria back to the east, whose leader, Colonel Ojukwu, announced that the eastern region had seceded (withdrawn) from Nigeria to become the independent state of Biafra (May 1967). Gowon launched what he described as a 'short surgical police action' to bring the east back into Nigeria.

(b) The civil war

It took more than a short police action, as the Biafrans fought back vigorously. Britain and the USSR supplied Gowon with arms, and France supplied Biafra. It was a bitter and terrible war, in which Biafra lost more civilians from disease and starvation than troops killed in the fighting. Neither the UN, the Commonwealth, nor the Organization of African Unity was able to mediate, and the Biafrans hung on to the bitter end as Nigerian troops closed in on all sides. The final surrender came in January 1970. Nigerian unity had been preserved.

(c) Recovery after the war was remarkably swift

There were pressing problems: famine in Biafra, inter-tribal bitterness, unemployment, and economic resources strained by the war. Gowon showed considerable statesmanship in this difficult situation. There was no revenge-taking, as the Ibos had feared, and Gowon made every effort to reconcile them, persuading them to return to their jobs in other parts of the country. He introduced a new federal system of 12 states, later increased to 19, to give more recognition of local tribal differences; this was a pragmatic move in a country with so much ethnic diversity. The Nigerians were able to take advantage of rising oil prices in the mid-1970s, which gave them a healthy balance of payments position. In 1975 Gowon was removed by another army group, which probably thought he intended to return the country to civilian rule too early. Nigeria continued to prosper and the army kept its promise of a return to democratic government in 1979. Elections were held, resulting in President Shagari becoming head of a civilian government. With Nigeria's oil much in demand abroad, prosperity seemed assured and prospects for a stable government bright.

(d) Unfulfilled promise

Unfortunately disappointment was soon to follow: during 1981 the economy got into difficulties. The Nigerians had relied too heavily on oil exports; there was a fall in world oil

prices, and the healthy trade balance of 1980 became a deficit in 1983. Although Shagari was elected for another four-year term (August 1983), he was removed by a military coup the following December. According to the new leader, Major-General Bukhari, the civilian government was guilty of mismanagement of the economy, financial corruption and rigging of the election. In August 1985, Bukhari became the victim of yet another coup carried out by a rival group of army officers who complained that he had not done enough to reverse the fall in living standards, rising prices, chronic shortages and unemployment. Simmering in the background was religious unrest between the largely Muslim north and the mainly Christian south.

The new president, Major-General Babangida, began energetically, introducing what he called a 'belt-tightening' campaign, and announcing plans to develop the non-oil side of the economy. He aimed to expand production of rice, maize, fish, vegetable oil and animal products, and to give special priority to steel manufacture and the assembly of motor vehicles. Following the example of Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, he declared that his military government would not remain in power 'a day longer than was absolutely necessary'. A committee of academics was set to work to produce a new constitution which could 'guarantee an acceptable and painless succession mechanism'; October 1990 was fixed as the date for a return to civilian rule. Another blow came in 1986 with a further dramatic fall in oil prices, which in June reached a record low of only $10 a barrel. This was a disaster for the government, which had based its 1986 budget calculations on a price of $23.50 a barrel. It was forced to accept a loan from the World Bank to enable the recovery programme to go ahead.

In spite of the economic problems, local and state elections were held as promised in 1990 and 1991 and there seemed a good chance of a return to democratic civilian rule; in June 1993 Chief Abiola won the presidential election. However, Babangida announced that the election had been annulled because of malpractices, although most foreign observers reported that it had been conducted fairly and peacefully. Babangida's deputy, General Sani Abacha, seized power in a bloodless coup, and Chief Abiola was later arrested.

Abacha's rule soon developed into a repressive military dictatorship with the imprisonment and execution of opposition leaders, which brought worldwide condemnation (November 1995). Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth and the UN applied economic sanctions; most countries stopped buying Nigerian oil and aid was suspended, which were further blows to the economy. Abacha meanwhile continued apparently unmoved, maintaining that he would hand power to a democratically elected president in 1998, or when he felt ready. Some opposition groups called for the country to be divided up into separate states; others demanded a looser federal system which would enable them to escape from the appalling Abacha regime. Corruption continued to flourish; it was reported that during Babangida's period of power, over $12 billion in oil revenues had gone missing, and this trend was maintained under Abacha. Nor were such practices confined to the political elite: there was evidence that at every level of activity, bribery was usually necessary to keep the system operating.

It seemed as though military rule might continue indefinitely; then in June 1998 Abacha died unexpectedly. He was replaced by General Abubakar, a northern Muslim, who promised a return to civilian rule as soon as was practical. Political prisoners were released, and political parties allowed to form, in preparation for elections to be held in 1999. Three main parties emerged: the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All People's Party (a more conservative party based in the north) and the Alliance for Democracy (a mainly Yoruba party based in the south-east). The presidential election held in February 1999 was declared by a team of international observers to be fair and free; Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP was declared the winner and he took over as president in May.

(e) Civilian rule again

President Obasanjo tried hard to make civilian rule a success; he began by retiring many of the military who had held official posts in the administration, and introduced new restrictions designed to eliminate corruption. Nigeria's international image improved and US president Clinton paid a visit in 2000, promising aid to restore the country's infrastructure, which had been allowed to fall into disrepair. However, things did not run smoothly: there was religious and ethnic violence, and the economy did not fulfil its potential.

- There was sporadic violence between different tribal groups. For example, in Nassarawa state, around 50 000 people were forced to flee from their homes after two months of fighting between the dominant Hausa tribe and the Tiv minority.
- The most serious problem was the continuous violence between Muslims and Christians. There had always been hostility between the two, but this was now further complicated by the issue of *Sharia law*. This is a system of Islamic law which imposes severe punishments, including amputation of limbs and death by stoning; for example: for theft – amputation of the right hand for a first offence, left foot for a second offence, left hand for a third, and so on. A man in the state of Zamfara lost his right hand for stealing the equivalent of £25. Punishments are especially severe on women: committing adultery and becoming pregnant outside marriage can bring a sentence of death by stoning. By the end of 2002, 12 of the 19 states – those in the north, which are mainly Muslim – had adopted Sharia law into their legal systems. Sharia was only applied to Muslims, but it was opposed by many Christians, who thought it was barbaric and medieval.

  In the other states, which have Christian majorities, there were violent clashes between Muslims and Christians. The president and the attorney-general, both Christians and southerners, were against the introduction of Sharia law, but were in a difficult situation. With the presidential election due in April 2003, they could not afford to antagonize the northern states. However, the attorney-general did go so far as to declare Sharia law illegal on the grounds that it infringed the rights of Muslims by subjecting them 'to a punishment more severe than would be imposed on other Nigerians for the same offence'. In March 2002 an appeal court overturned the death sentence imposed on a woman in Sokoto state for adultery; but in the same month, a woman in Katsina state was sentenced to death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock. Later in the year a young couple were sentenced to death for having sex outside marriage. These sentences aroused strong international protests; both the European Union and the USA expressed their concern, and the federal government of Nigeria said that it was totally opposed to such sentences.
- There was serious violence in the northern city of Kaduna following the unwise decision to stage the Miss World contest in Nigeria in December 2002. Many Muslims strongly disapproved, but in November an article appeared in the national newspaper, *This Day*, which suggested that the Prophet Mohammed himself would not have objected to the Miss World contest, and would probably have chosen a wife from among the contestants. This outraged Muslim opinion; the offices of *This Day* in Kaduna were destroyed by Muslims, and some churches were burned. Christians retaliated and over 200 people died in the rioting that followed. The Miss World contest was relocated to the UK, and the deputy governor of the northern state of Zamfara issued a *fatwa* (formal decision) urging Muslims to kill Isioma Daniel, the writer of the article.
- Early in 2003 there were outbreaks of ethnic violence in the southern Niger delta region. This was serious because it was an important oil-producing centre; three

foreign oil companies were forced to suspend operations, and Nigeria's total output of oil fell by 40 per cent.

In spite of all the problems, president Obasanjo won a convincing victory in the elections of April 2003, taking over 60 per cent of the votes; his People's Democratic Party won majorities in both houses of parliament. But things did not become any easier for him: in July the country was crippled by a general strike in protest against large increases in the price of petrol. Violence between Christians and Muslims now seemed a permanent feature of life in Nigeria; in February 2004 at least 150 people were killed in Plateau state in central Nigeria, after Muslims attacked a church and Christians took revenge. Statistics published by the UN showed that between 66 and 70 per cent of the population were living in poverty, compared with 48.5 per cent as recently as 1998. The same basic problem continues – the misuse of Nigeria's oil wealth. By 2004 the country had been exporting oil for more than 30 years, earning over $250 billion in revenue. However, ordinary people had seen very little benefit, while the ruling elites had amassed huge fortunes. In 2005 the president seemed to be making determined efforts to root out corruption. Several government ministers were sacked and even the vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, was accused of accepting bribes. During 2006 Nigerians were treated to the spectacle of their president and vice-president accusing each other of corruption and demanding the other's resignation. The constitution did not allow a president to run for more than two terms; however, the 2007 presidential election was won by Obasanjo's choice for the PDP party, the highly respected Umaru Yar'Adua.

Sadly, Yar'Adua was dogged by ill health and in November 2009 was flown to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, took over as acting president. Yar'Adua's death was announced in May 2010. Goodluck Jonathan was elected president in April 2011. His popularity soon plummeted when he announced the removal of a fuel subsidy, one of the few benefits that ordinary Nigerians enjoyed from their country's oil. The removal more than doubled the price of petrol from 45 cents a litre to 94 cents a litre, causing nationwide and violent protests culminating in a week-long strike. Eventually Jonathan bowed to pressure and announced that the price would be 60 cents a litre (January 2012). The unions called off the strikes but many people still believed that the price was too high. Meanwhile there was violence in the north where a radical Islamist group, Boko Haram, which wanted a separate Islamic state in the north, was blamed for a series of shootings and bombings killing around 500 people in the first of half of 2012. President Jonathan and his PDP supporters announced that they were determined to preserve the unity of Nigeria and to restore peace and security; but towards the end of the year there were reports that the government was on the verge of losing control of the north.

25.4 TANZANIA

Tanganyika became independent in 1961 and was joined in 1964 by the island of Zanzibar to form Tanzania. It was ruled by Dr Julius Nyerere, leader of the Tanzanian African Nationalist Union (TANU), who had to deal with formidable problems:

- Tanzania was one of the poorest states in the whole of Africa.
- There was very little industry, few mineral resources and a heavy dependence on coffee production.
- Later, Tanzania became involved in expensive military operations to overthrow President Idi Amin of Uganda, and provided help and training for nationalist guerrillas from countries like Zimbabwe.

- On the other hand, tribal problems were not as serious as elsewhere, and the Swahili language provided a common bond.

Nyerere retired as president in 1985 (aged 63), though he remained chairman of the party until 1990. He was succeeded as president by Ali Hassan Mwinyi, who had been vice-president, and who ruled for the next ten years.

(a) Nyerere's approach and achievements

His approach was different from that of any other African ruler. He began conventionally enough by expanding the economy: during the first ten years of independence, production of coffee and cotton doubled and sugar production trebled, while health services and education expanded. But Nyerere was not happy that Tanzania seemed to be developing along the same lines as Kenya, with an ever-widening gulf between the wealthy elite and the resentful masses. His proposed solution to the problem was set out in a remarkable document known as *the Arusha Declaration*, published in 1967. The country was to be run on socialist lines.

- All human beings should be treated as equal.
- The state must have effective control over the means of production and must intervene in economic life to make sure that people were not exploited, and that poverty and disease were eliminated.
- There must be no great accumulations of wealth, or society would no longer be classless.
- Bribery and corruption must be eliminated.
- According to Nyerere, Tanzania was at war, and the enemy was poverty and oppression. The way to victory was not through money and foreign aid, but through hard work and self-reliance. The first priority was to improve agriculture so that the country could be self-sufficient in food production.

Nyerere strove hard to put these aims into practice: all important enterprises, including those owned by foreigners, were nationalized; five-year development plans were introduced. Village projects were encouraged and given aid by the government; these involved *ujamaa* ('familyhood', or self-help): families in each village pooled resources and farmed in co-operatives; these were small but viable units which operated collectively and could use more modern techniques. Foreign loans and investments as well as imports were reduced to a minimum to avoid running into debt. Politically, Nyerere's brand of socialism meant a one-party state run by TANU, but elections were still held. It seemed that some elements of genuine democracy existed, since voters in each constituency had a choice of two TANU candidates and every election resulted in a large proportion of MPs losing their seats. Nyerere himself provided dignified leadership, and with his simple lifestyle and complete indifference to wealth, he set the perfect example for the party and the country to follow. It was a fascinating experiment which tried to combine socialist direction from the centre with the African traditions of local decision-making. It tried to provide an alternative to western capitalist society with its pursuit of profit, which most other African states seemed to be copying.

(b) Success or failure?

Despite Nyerere's achievements, it was clear when he retired in 1985 that his experiment had been, at best, only a limited success. At an international conference on the Arusha

Declaration (held December 1986), President Mwinyi gave some impressive social statistics which few other African countries could match: 3.7 million children in primary school; two universities with, in total, over 4500 students; a literacy rate of 85 per cent; 150 hospitals and 2600 dispensaries; infant mortality down to 137 per thousand; life expectancy up to 52.

However, other parts of the Arusha Declaration were not achieved. Corruption crept in because many officials were not as high-minded as Nyerere himself. There was insufficient investment in agriculture so that production was far below what was expected. The nationalization of the sisal estates carried out in the 1960s was a failure – Nyerere himself admitted that production had declined from 220 000 tonnes in 1970 to only 47 000 tonnes in 1984, and in May 1985 he reversed the nationalization. From the end of 1978, Tanzania was in difficulties because of the fall in world prices of coffee and tea (her main exports), rising oil prices (which used up almost half her earnings from exports) and the expense of the war against Amin in Uganda (at least £1000 million). Although oil prices began to fall during 1981, there was soon the problem of the near-collapse of her other exports (cattle, cement and agricultural produce), which left her without foreign exchange. Loans from the IMF only brought her the added problem of how to meet the interest repayments. Tanzania was nowhere near being a socialist state, nor was it self-sufficient – two major aims of the Declaration. Nyerere's socialist experiment might have worked well in a closed economy, but unfortunately Tanzania was becoming part of the 'global village', exposed to the vagaries of the world economy.

Nevertheless Nyerere was deservedly highly respected both as an African and as a world statesman, as an enemy of apartheid in South Africa, and as an outspoken critic of the world economy and the way it exploited poor countries. He played a vital role in the overthrow of Idi Amin, the brutal dictator who ruled Uganda from 1971 until 1979. Nyerere's prestige was at its height when he was chosen as chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for 1984–5.

(c) Tanzania after Nyerere

Nyerere's successor, President Mwinyi, while at first keeping to the one-party system, began to move away from strict government control, allowing more private enterprise and a mixed economy; he also accepted financial help from the IMF, which Nyerere had always avoided. Mwinyi was re-elected for a further five-year term in 1990; in 1992 a new constitution was introduced, allowing a multi-party system. The first major democratic elections were held in October 1995. Mwinyi was obliged to stand down after two terms as president. The ruling party, which now called itself Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM – the Party of the Revolution), put forward Benjamin Mkapa as its presidential candidate. He won a clear victory, with 60 per cent of the votes, and the CCM won 214 out of the 269 seats in parliament.

Tanzania's economy continued to be fragile and dependent on foreign aid. But foreign aid often came with unpleasant strings attached. In April 2000, for example, the IMF announced a debt-relief package for Tanzania, but one of the conditions was that parents had to contribute part of the fees for their children's education. This was totally unrealistic for a poor country like Tanzania and consequently the numbers of children in primary schools fell sharply. Nor was the situation helped by the spread of the HIV/AIDS virus, which infected over a million people. Care and prevention became major public health problems. At the same time, there were some promising developments. In 1999 Tanzania's first commercial gold mine went into production, and in 2000 preparations began for the mining of tanzanite, a precious stone even rarer than diamonds. As the elections of October 2000 approached, the government was troubled by a series of corruption scandals

involving some of its wealthiest members, and also by nationalist sentiment in Zanzibar, which wanted more freedom from the mainland. However, the opposition parties were disorganized and seemed to have nothing better to offer; the president and his CCM won a sweeping victory – Mkapa took over 70 per cent of the votes and CCM won about 90 per cent of the seats in parliament. Foreign observers declared the elections to be free and fair, except in Zanzibar, where there were always complaints of rigging.

As Tanzania moved further into the twenty-first century, the economy began to fulfil some of its promise. President Mkapa privatized a number of state-owned corporations and introduced free-market policies, hoping that this would attract foreign investment and help towards economic expansion. The IMF and World Bank were so impressed by this that they obligingly agreed to cancel some of Tanzania's foreign debts. By the time Mkapa stepped down at the end of his second term in 2005, Tanzania was well on the way to becoming the world's third largest gold producer, and both foreign investment and tourism were increasing. However, although he had promised to put an end to corruption, he himself was accused of having, during the privatizations, illegally appropriated to himself, a coal mine. He was also criticized for spending £15 million on a private presidential jet. In the 2005 election the CCM candidate, Jakaya Kikwete, a protégé of Julius Nyerere, was elected president. He vowed to eliminate corruption and invested in the building of around 1500 new schools around the country and a new university at Dodoma, the capital. The USA gave a grant of some $700 million to help Tanzania's general development, and the UK promised £500 million towards education.

25.5 THE CONGO/ZAIRE

(a) Why and how did civil war develop?

Section 24.6 (b) explained how the Belgians suddenly allowed the Congo to become independent in June 1960, with completely inadequate preparations. There was no experienced group of Africans to which power could be handed over. The Congolese had not been educated for professional jobs, very few had received any higher education and no political parties had been allowed. This did not mean that civil war was inevitable, but there were added complications.

- There were about 150 different tribes (or ethnic groups, as they now tend to be called), which would have made the Congo difficult to hold together even with experienced administrators. Violent and chaotic elections were held in which the Congolese National Movement (MNC), led by a former post-office clerk, Patrice Lumumba, emerged as the dominant party; but there were over 50 different groups. Agreement of any sort was going to be difficult; nevertheless the Belgians handed power over to a coalition government with Lumumba as prime minister, and Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of another group, as president.
- A mutiny broke out in the Congolese army (July 1960) only a few days after independence. This was in protest against the fact that all officers were Belgians, whereas the Africans expected instant promotion. Lumumba was deprived of the means of keeping law and order, and tribal violence began to spread.
- The south-eastern province of Katanga, which had rich copper deposits, was encouraged by the Belgian company (Union Minière) which still controlled the copper-mining industry, to declare itself independent under Moïse Tshombe. This was the wealthiest part of the Congo, which the new state could not afford to lose. Lumumba, unable to rely on his mutinous army, appealed to the UN to help him preserve Congolese unity, and a 3000-strong peacekeeping force soon arrived.

(b) The civil war and the role of the UN

Lumumba wanted to use UN troops to force Katanga back into the Congo, but the situation was complex. The president had already made himself unpopular with the Americans and British because of his outspoken socialism; the Americans in particular regarded him as a dangerous communist who would align the Congo on the side of the USSR in the Cold War. Many Belgians preferred an independent Katanga, which would be easier for them to influence, and they wanted to continue their control of the copper mining. Faced with all these pressures, the UN secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, refused to allow a UN attack on Katanga, though at the same time he refused to recognize Katangese independence. In disgust Lumumba appealed for help to the Russians, but this horrified Kasavubu, who, supported by General Joseph Mobutu and encouraged by the Americans and Belgians, had Lumumba arrested; he and two former ministers in his government were later badly beaten and then murdered by Belgian troops. As the chaos continued, Hammarskjöld realized that more decisive UN action was needed, and although he was killed in an air crash while flying to Katanga to see Tshombe, his successor, U Thant, followed the same line. By mid-1961 there were 20 000 UN troops in the Congo; in September they invaded Katanga and in December 1962 the province admitted failure and ended its secession; Tshombe went into exile.

Though successful, UN operations had been expensive, and within a few months all their troops were withdrawn. Tribal rivalries aggravated by unemployment caused disorders to break out again almost immediately, and calm was not restored until 1965 when General Mobutu of the Congolese army, using white mercenaries and backed by the USA and Belgium, crushed all resistance and took over the government himself.

(c) General Mobutu in power

It was probably inevitable that if the Congo, with its many problems (an under-developed economy, tribal divisions and a shortage of educated people), was to stay united, a strong authoritarian government was required. Mobutu provided exactly that! There was a gradual improvement in conditions as the Congolese gained experience of administration, and the economy began to look healthier after most of the European-owned mines were nationalized.

However, in the late 1970s there were more troubles. In 1977 Katanga (now known as Shaba) was invaded by troops from Angola, apparently encouraged by the Angolan government, which resented Mobutu's earlier intervention in its affairs, and by the USSR, which resented American support for Mobutu. This was a way for the USSR to make a gesture against the Americans, and yet another extension of the Cold War.

Having survived that problem, Zaire (as the country had been called since 1971) found itself in economic difficulties, mainly because of declining world copper prices, and drought which made expensive food imports necessary. Mobutu came under increasing criticism outside Zaire for his authoritarian style of government and his huge personal fortune. In May 1980 Amnesty International claimed that at least a thousand political prisoners were being held without trial and that several hundred had died from torture or starvation during 1978–9. An important new measure, the Nationality Law, was introduced in 1981. This restricted citizenship in Zaire to people who could demonstrate a family connection with the Congo at the time of the Berlin Conference of 1885. It aimed to deal with the problem dating back to the colonial era, when tens of thousands of migrant workers had moved into the Congo from neighbouring territories. The problem was exacerbated later by an influx of refugees from Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. There

was tension between the indigenous population and the immigrants, and the Nationality Law was passed in response to pressure from the indigenous Congolese. However, it was difficult to implement, and conflict between the two continued. In 1990 Mobutu allowed a multi-party system, but with himself above politics as head of state. He remained in power, but in 1995, after 30 years of his rule, he was becoming more and more unpopular with his people.

(d) The Kabilas, and civil war again

In the mid-1990s opposition to Mobutu increased. In the east of Zaire, Laurent Kabila, who had been a supporter of Patrice Lumumba, organized forces and began to move towards Kinshasa, the capital. In May 1997 Mobutu left the country and died later in the year in exile in Morocco. Laurent Kabila became president and changed the country's name from Zaire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). If the Congolese people had expected dramatic changes in the system of government, they were soon disappointed. Kabila continued many of Mobutu's techniques – opposition politicians and journalists were arrested, political parties were banned, and elections cancelled. Some of his own supporters began to turn against him; the Banyamulenge, a people of Tutsi origin, many of whom had fought in Kabila's army, resented what they saw as his favouritism towards members of his own Luba tribe. They began a rebellion in the east (August 1998) and received support from the governments of neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda. The governments of Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia pledged support for Kabila. With forces from six countries involved, the conflict soon developed a wider significance than just a civil war. In spite of attempts at negotiation, hostilities dragged on into the next century. Then in January 2001 Kabila was assassinated by a member of his bodyguard, who was immediately himself shot dead. His motive was unclear, though the murder was blamed on the rebels.

The ruling group quickly declared Kabila's son Joseph, the head of the Congolese military, as the next president. Joseph Kabila seemed more conciliatory than his father, promising free and fair elections and announcing that he was willing to make peace with the rebels. It was reported that since the civil war began, almost 3 million people had lost their lives, most of them from starvation and disease in the rebel area in the east. Encouraging signs soon developed:

- Restrictions on political parties were lifted (May 2001).
- The UN agreed that its peace mission should stay on in the DRC; it also welcomed the withdrawal of Namibian troops and called for other states with forces still in the DRC to withdraw them.
- Peace agreements were signed between the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda (2002), with South Africa and the UN acting as guarantors. Both sides were to withdraw troops from the eastern area of the country; a system of power-sharing was to be introduced in which Kabila remained president, with four vice-presidents chosen from the various rebel groups. The transitional power-sharing government would work towards elections in 2005.

The new transitional government was formed in July 2003; the future looked more promising than for many years, though sporadic ethnic violence continued. Especially troubled was the north-eastern province of Ituri, where there were clashes between the Hema and Lendu tribes. A major step forward was achieved in 2005 when citizenship was awarded to everybody descended from ethnic groups present in the country at the time of independence in 1960. In July 2006 elections were held for president and for the

national and provincial assemblies. Joseph Kabila took 44 per cent of the vote and did particularly well in the eastern Congo. His party won 111 out of 500 seats in the national assembly. Kabila's nearest rival, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, a former rebel leader, won 20 per cent of the vote and did well in western Congo. Kabila had failed to win a large enough majority and a second round of voting was held in October. In the meantime violence broke out between armies of rival supporters, but the election itself went off reasonably peacefully and was declared to have been fairly conducted. This time Kabila won decisively, taking 58 per cent of the votes and was able to form a coalition government. However, Bemba refused to accept the result, and in March 2007 he tried to seize power in Kinshasa. After fierce fighting Bemba's forces were defeated and he took refuge in the South African embassy. He was allowed to fly to Portugal but was later arrested and taken to the Netherlands where, in July 2008, an International Criminal Court charged him with war crimes.

Joseph Kabila was elected for a second term as president in December 2011, but the election was widely condemned and described as 'lacking credibility'. It was reported that the votes from almost 2000 polling stations in areas where support for the opposition candidate, Etienne Tshisekede, was strong had been 'lost'. The election was also condemned by the 35 Roman Catholic bishops in the DRC as being full of 'treachery, lies and terror'. They called for the electoral commission to put right 'serious errors'. The Archbishop of Kinshasa even called for a campaign of civil disobedience until the election result was annulled (January 2012). Nevertheless, Kabila stayed in power and the violence continued through 2012 as various rebel groups, with help from Rwanda, tried to overthrow him. In September 2012 President Kagame of Rwanda insisted that Rwanda's intervention was to protect Rwanda business interests in the DRC and to preserve Rwanda's security.

25.6 ANGOLA

(a) Civil war escalates

Section 25.6(d) described how Angola was engulfed by civil war immediately after gaining independence from Portugal in 1975. Part of the problem was that there were three different liberation movements, which started to fight each other almost as soon as independence was declared.

- The **MPLA** (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) was a Marxist-style party which tried to appeal across tribal divisions to all Angolans. It was the MPLA which claimed to be the new government, with its leader, Agostinho Neto, as president.
- **UNITA** (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), with its leader Jonas Savimbi, drew much of its support from the Ovimbundu tribe in the south of the country.
- **FNLA** (National Front for the Liberation of Angola); much weaker than the other two, it drew much of its support from the Bakongo tribe in the north-west.

Alarm bells immediately rang in the USA, which did not like the look of the Marxist MPLA. The Americans therefore decided to back the FNLA (which was also supported by President Mobutu of Zaire), providing advisers, cash and armaments, and encouraged it to attack the MPLA. UNITA also launched an offensive against the MPLA. Cuba sent troops to help the MPLA, while South African troops, supporting the other two groups, invaded Angola via neighbouring Namibia in the south. General Mobutu also sent troops in from Zaire to the north-east of Angola. No doubt there would have been fighting and bloodshed

anyway, but outside interference and the extension of the Cold War to Angola certainly made the conflict much worse.

(b) Angola and Namibia

The problem of Namibia also complicated the situation. Lying between Angola and South Africa, Namibia (formerly German South West Africa) had been handed to South Africa in 1919 at the end of the First World War, to be prepared for independence. The white South African government had ignored UN orders and delayed handing Namibia over to black majority rule as long as possible. The Namibian liberation movement, SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization), and its leader, Sam Nujoma, began a guerrilla campaign against South Africa. After 1975 the MPLA allowed SWAPO to have bases in southern Angola, so it was not surprising that the South African government was so hostile to the MPLA.

(c) The Lisbon Peace Accords (May 1991)

The civil war dragged on right through the 1980s until changing international circumstances brought the possibility of peace. In December 1988 the UN managed to arrange a peace settlement, in which South Africa agreed to withdraw from Namibia provided that the 50 000 Cuban troops left Angola. This agreement went ahead: Namibia became independent under the leadership of Sam Nujoma (1990). The end of the Cold War and of communist rule in eastern Europe meant that all communist support for the MPLA ceased, all Cuban troops had gone home by June 1991, and South Africa was ready to end her involvement. The UN, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the USA and Russia all played a part in setting up peace talks between the MPLA government of Angola and UNITA in Lisbon (the capital of Portugal). It was agreed that there should be a ceasefire followed by elections, to be monitored by the UN.

(d) The failure of the peace

At first all seemed to go well: the ceasefire held and elections took place in September 1992. The MPLA won 58 per cent (129) of the seats in parliament, UNITA only 31 per cent (70 seats). Although the presidential election result was much closer – MPLA president Jose Eduardo Dos Santos won 49.57 per cent of the votes, with Jonas Savimbi (UNITA) taking 40.07 per cent – it was still a clear and decisive victory for the MPLA.

However, Savimbi and UNITA refused to accept the result, claiming that there had been fraud, even though the elections had been monitored by 400 UN observers; the leader of the UN team reported that the election had been 'generally free and fair'. Tragically UNITA, instead of accepting defeat gracefully, renewed the civil war, which was fought with increasing bitterness. By the end of January 1994 the UN reported that there were 3.3 million refugees and that an average of a thousand people a day, mainly civilians, were dying. The UN had too few personnel in Angola to bring the fighting to an end. This time the outside world could not be blamed for the civil war: this was clearly the fault of UNITA. However, many observers blamed the USA for encouraging UNITA: shortly before the Lisbon agreement, President Reagan had officially met Savimbi in the USA, which made him seem like an equal with the MPLA government instead of a rebel leader. At the same time the USA had not officially recognized the MPLA as the legal government of Angola, even after the elections; it was not until May 1993, six months

after UNITA had resumed the war, that the USA finally gave recognition to the MPLA government.

A ceasefire was eventually negotiated in October 1994 and a peace agreement was reached in November. UNITA, which was losing the war by that time, accepted the 1992 election result, and in return was to be allowed to play a part in what would be, in effect, a coalition government. Early in 1995, 7000 UN troops arrived to help enforce the agreement and supervise the transition to peace. But incredibly, Savimbi soon began to break the terms of the agreement; financing his forces with the proceeds from illicit sales of diamonds, he continued the struggle against the government until February 2002, when he was killed in an ambush by government troops. His death changed the situation dramatically. Almost immediately the new leaders of UNITA showed a willingness to negotiate. In April 2002 a ceasefire was signed, and the two sides promised to keep the terms of the 1994 agreement. The Angolan National Assembly voted in favour of extending an amnesty to all UNITA members, including fighters and civilians. The whole agreement was to be monitored by the UN. At last, with Savimbi no longer on the scene, there seemed to be a genuine chance for peace and reconstruction in Angola.

During the 27 years of its existence, Angola had not known real peace, and its development had been severely hampered. It was a potentially prosperous country, rich in oil, diamonds and minerals; the central highlands were fertile – ideal for rearing cattle and raising crops; coffee was a major product. But at the end of the twentieth century the economy was in a mess: inflation was running at 240 per cent, the war was ruinously expensive, and the vast majority of the population was living in poverty, and thousands were on the verge of starvation. Leading politicians faced accusations of corruption on a grand scale. According to the IMF over $4 billion of oil receipts had disappeared from the treasury since 1996. Human Rights Watch reported that UNITA had employed 86 000 child soldiers, and even the government forces had used 3000. The two armies between them had laid some 15 million landmines and many of these still had to be destroyed. It was calculated that about 4 million people (a third of the population) had been forced to leave their homes and were left homeless in 2002, while 1.5 million had been killed.

Angola's natural resources enabled the country to recover reasonably quickly economically. An encouraging sign was the signing of a peace deal with the separatist rebels of the Cabinda region. It was a relatively small area with a population of little more than 100,000, but it was important because about 65 per cent of Angola's oil comes from there. In September 2008 the first national elections for 16 years took place. The ruling MPLA won just over 80 per cent of the votes, while the main opposition party (UNITA) could muster only 10 per cent, giving the MPLA and president José Eduardo dos Santos a two-thirds majority in parliament. By 2010 the president's popularity was beginning to wane. One of the main criticisms was that he and his family had amassed huge personal fortunes while the country's recovery and wealth had not percolated down to ordinary people. He survived an assassination attempt in October 2010, and there was an increasing number of massive anti-government demonstrations. By September 2011 the police were using violent methods to disperse demonstrators. However, President dos Santos, now aged 70, appeared to be the comfortable winner in the election of August 2012, and thanks to a change in the constitution, he seemed set to stay in power until 2022.

25.7 BURUNDI AND RWANDA

The Belgians left these two small states, like the Congo, completely unprepared for independence. In both states there was an explosive mixture of two tribes – the Tutsi and the Hutu. They spoke the same language and looked very much alike, and although the Hutu were in a majority, the Tutsi were the elite ruling group, and they followed different

occupations: the Tutsi raised cattle (the word 'Tutsi' actually means 'rich in cattle'), whereas the Hutu were mainly farmers growing bananas and other crops (the word 'Hutu' means 'servant'). There was continuous tension and skirmishing between the two tribes right from independence day in 1962.

(a) Burundi

There was a mass rising of Hutus against the ruling Tutsi in 1972; this was savagely put down, and over 100 000 Hutu were killed, along with many Tutsi. Some 200 000 Tutsi fled into Tanzania. In 1988 Hutu soldiers in the Burundi army massacred thousands of Tutsi. In 1993 the country held its first democratic elections and for the first time a Hutu president was chosen. Tutsi soldiers soon murdered the new president, in October 1993, but other members of the Hutu government were able to escape. As Hutu carried out reprisal killings against Tutsi, massacre followed massacre; around 50 000 Tutsi were killed and the country disintegrated into chaos. Eventually the army imposed a power-sharing agreement: the prime minister was to be a Tutsi, the president a Hutu, but most of the power was concentrated in the hands of the Tutsi prime minister.

Fighting continued into 1996, and the Organization of African Unity, which sent a peacekeeping force (the first time it had ever taken such action), was unable to prevent the continuing massacres and ethnic cleansing. The economy was in ruins, agricultural production was seriously reduced because much of the rural population had fled, and the government seemed to have no ideas about how to end the war. The outside world and the great powers showed little concern – their interests were not involved or threatened – and the conflict in Burundi was not given much coverage in the world's media. In July 1996, the army overthrew the divided government, and Major Pierre Buyoya (a Tutsi moderate) declared himself president. He claimed that this was not a normal coup – the army had seized power in order to save lives. He had the utmost difficulty in pacifying the country; several former African presidents, including Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Nelson Mandela of South Africa, attempted to mediate. The problem was that there were about 20 different warring groups, and it was difficult to get representatives of them all together at the same time. In October 2001 an agreement was reached at Arusha (Tanzania), with the help of Mandela. There was to be a three-year transitional period; during the first half of this, Buyoya would continue as president with a Hutu vice-president; after this, a Hutu would become president with a Tutsi vice-president. There was to be an international peacekeeping force and restrictions were to be lifted on political activity. However, not all the rebel groups had signed the Arusha agreement, and fighting continued, in spite of the arrival of South African peacekeepers.

Prospects for peace brightened in December 2002 when the main Hutu rebel party at last signed a ceasefire with the government. President Buyoya kept his side of the Arusha agreement, handing over the presidency to Domitien Ndayizeye, a Hutu (April 2003). The new president was soon able to reach a power-sharing agreement with the remaining Hutu rebel group, but the peace remained fragile. Elections for parliament in 2005 resulted in a series of victories for the ruling party, and its leader, Pierre Nkurunziza, was chosen as the next president. One of the younger generation of Hutu leaders, he described himself as a born-again Christian and was committed to restoring peace and harmony among all Burundians. He also aimed to revive the economy and develop social policy. His first achievement was to reach a ceasefire with the last of the rebel militias (2006). New policies were introduced to safeguard the rights of women and children and to provide free education for primary-school children. He was also keen to keep in touch with ordinary people, and spent a lot of time in the countryside, meeting and talking with villagers. He received several international honours including a UN peace award, and in August 2009 he

was presented with the 'Model Leader for a New Africa Award' by the African Forum on Religion and Government, the first African president to be so honoured. In August 2010, President Nkurunziza was elected for a second five-year term.

(b) Rwanda

Tribal warfare began in 1959 before independence, and reached its first big climax in 1963, when the Hutu, fearing a Tutsi invasion from Burundi, massacred thousands of Rwandan Tutsi and overthrew the Tutsi government. In 1990 fighting broke out between the rebel Tutsi-dominated Rwandese Patriotic Front (Front Patriotique Rwandais – FPR), which was based over the border in Uganda, and the official Rwandan army (Hutu-dominated). This lasted off and on until 1993 when the UN helped to negotiate a peace settlement at Arusha in Tanzania, between the Rwandan government (Hutu) and the FPR (Tutsi): there was to be a more broadly-based government, which would include the FPR; 2500 UN troops were sent to monitor the transition to peace (October 1993).

For a few months all seemed to be going well, and then disaster struck. The more extreme Hutu were bitterly opposed to the Arusha peace plan, and shocked by the murder of the Hutu president of Burundi. Extremist Hutu, who had formed their own militia (the Interahamwe), decided to act. The aircraft bringing the moderate Hutu President Habyarimana of Rwanda and the Burundian president back from talks in Tanzania was brought down by a missile, apparently fired by extremist Hutu as it approached Kigali (the capital of Rwanda), killing both presidents (April 1994). With the president dead, nobody was sure who was giving the orders, and this gave the Interahamwe the cover they needed to launch a campaign of genocide. The most horrifying tribal slaughter followed; Hutu murdered all Tutsi they could lay hands on, including women and children. A favourite technique was to persuade Tutsi to take sanctuary in churches and then destroy the church buildings and the sheltering Tutsi. Even nuns and clergy were caught up in the massacre. Altogether about 800 000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu who tried to help their neighbours were brutally murdered in what was clearly a deliberate and carefully planned attempt to wipe out the entire Tutsi population of Rwanda, and it was backed by the Hutu government of Rwanda.

The Tutsi FPR responded by taking up the fight again and marching on the capital; UN observers reported that the streets of Kigali were literally running with blood and the corpses were piled high. The small UN force was not equipped to deal with violence on this scale, and it soon withdrew. The civil war and the genocide continued through into June; in addition to those killed, about a million Tutsi refugees had fled into neighbouring Tanzania and Zaire.

Meanwhile the rest of the world, though outraged and horrified by the scale of the genocide, did nothing to stop it. Historian Linda Melvern has shown how the warning signs of what was to come were ignored by all those who might have prevented the genocide. She claims that Belgium and France both knew what was being planned; as early as the spring of 1992, the Belgian ambassador told his government that extremist Hutus were 'planning the extermination of the Tutsi of Rwanda once and for all, and to crush the internal Hutu opposition'. The French continued to supply the Hutu with arms throughout the genocide; US president Clinton knew precisely what was happening, but after the humiliation of the US intervention in Somalia in 1992, he was determined not to get involved. Linda Melvern is highly critical of the UN; she points out that UN secretary-general Boutros-Ghali knew Rwanda well and was aware of the situation, but being pro-Hutu, refused to allow arms inspections and avoided sending sufficient UN forces to deal with the problem. On the other hand, it was not just the West and the UN that turned a blind eye to the tragedy in Rwanda; the Organization of African Unity did not even condemn the genocide, let alone try to prevent it; nor did any other African states take any action or issue public

condemnation. Arguably African attention was focused on the new democracy in South Africa rather than on halting the genocide in Rwanda.

By September the FPR were beginning to get the upper hand: the Hutu government was driven out and a Tutsi FPR government was set up in Kigali. But progress to peace was slow; by the end of 1996 this new government was still beginning to make its authority felt over the whole country, and refugees started to return. Eventually a power-sharing arrangement was reached, and a moderate Hutu, Pasteur Bizimungu, became president with Paul Kagame, a Tutsi, as his vice-president. This was an important concession by the Tutsi as they tried to deflect accusations of a resurgent Tutsi elitism, though in fact Kagame was the real policy decider. However, in 2000 when Bizimungu began to criticize parts of Kagame's programme, he was removed from the presidency and Kagame took over. Bizimunbu immediately founded an opposition party but the Kagame government banned it.

One of the problems facing the government was that jails were overflowing with well over 100 000 prisoners awaiting trial for involvement in the 1994 genocide. There were simply too many for the courts to deal with. In January 2003, Kagame ordered the release of around 40 000 prisoners, though it was made clear that they would face trial eventually. This caused consternation among many survivors of the massacres, who were horrified at the prospect of coming face to face with the people who had murdered their relatives.

A new constitution was introduced in 2003 providing for a president and a two-chamber parliament and established a balance of political power between Hutu and Tutsi – no party can hold more than half the seats in parliament. It also outlawed the incitement of ethnic hatred in the hope of avoiding a repeat of the genocide. In the first national elections since 1994, President Kagame won an overwhelming victory, taking 95 per cent of the votes (August 2003). However, observers reported that there were 'malpractices' in some areas, and two of the main opposition parties were banned. But at least Rwanda seemed to be enjoying a period of relative calm. In February 2004, the government introduced a new reconciliation policy: people who admitted their guilt and asked for forgiveness before 15 March 2004 would be released (except those accused of organizing the genocide). It was hoped that this, like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, would help Rwandans to come to terms with the traumas of the past and move forward into a period of peace and harmony.

Certainly economic and social conditions improved during Kagame's presidency. He succeeded in reducing the amount of corruption and crime; between 2000 and 2008 per capita income doubled; almost half the country's children were receiving a full primary education, compared with 20 per cent before Kagame came to power; and there was a marked increase in life expectancy. Rwandans infected with AIDS could now receive antiretroviral drugs in health centres across the country. Exports of tea and coffee began to increase, and tourism became an important source of revenue, especially the safari parks. In 2009 Rwanda was accepted as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations; this was an attempt to distance the country from its Belgian past. President Kagame was decisively re-elected for a further term in August 2010, although doubts were expressed by observers about how free the elections really were. During the election campaign, several opposition supporters and journalists were killed and press freedom was limited. The UN, the European Union and the USA all expressed concerns about these developments.

25.8 APARTHEID AND BLACK MAJORITY RULE IN SOUTH AFRICA

(a) The formation of the Union of South Africa

South Africa has had a complicated history. The first Europeans to settle there permanently were members of the Dutch East India Company who founded a colony at the Cape of

Good Hope in 1652. It remained a Dutch colony until 1795, and during that time, the Dutch, who were known as Afrikaners or Boers (a word meaning 'farmers'), took land away from the native Africans and forced them to work as labourers, treating them as little better than slaves. They also brought more labourers in from Asia, Mozambique and Madagascar.

In 1795 the Cape was captured by the British during the French Revolutionary Wars, and the 1814 peace settlement decided that it should remain British. Many British settlers went out to Cape Colony. The Dutch settlers became restless under British rule, especially when the British government made all slaves free throughout the British Empire (1838). The Boer farmers felt that this threatened their livelihood, and many of them decided to leave Cape Colony. They moved northwards (in what became known as 'the Great Trek') and set up their own independent republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State (1835–40). Some also moved into the area east of Cape Colony known as Natal. In the Boer War (1899–1902) the British defeated the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, and in 1910 they joined up with Cape Colony and Natal to form the Union of South Africa.

The population of the new state was mixed:

Approximately

70 per cent were black Africans, known as Bantus;
18 per cent were whites of European origin; of these about 60 per cent were Dutch, the rest British;
9 per cent were of mixed race, known as 'coloureds';
3 per cent were Asians.

Although they made up the vast majority of the population, black Africans suffered even worse discrimination than black people in the USA.

- The whites dominated politics and the economic life of the new state, and, with only a few exceptions, blacks were not allowed to vote.
- Black people had to do most of the manual work in factories, in the gold mines and on farms; the men mostly lived in barracks accommodation away from their wives and children. Black people generally were expected to live in areas reserved for them away from white residential areas. These reserved areas made up only about 7 per cent of the total area of South Africa and were not large enough to enable the Africans to produce sufficient food for themselves and to pay all their taxes. Black Africans were forbidden to buy land outside the reserves.
- The government controlled the movement of blacks by a system of pass laws. For example, a black person could not live in a town unless he had a pass showing that he was working in a white-owned business. An African could not leave the farm where he worked without a pass from his employer; nor could he get a new job unless his previous employer signed him out officially; many workers were forced to stay in difficult working conditions, even under abusive employers.
- Living and working conditions for blacks were primitive; for example, in the gold-mining industry, Africans had to live in single-sex compounds with sometimes as many as ninety men sharing a dormitory.
- By a law of 1911, black workers were forbidden to strike and were barred from holding skilled jobs.

(b) Dr Malan introduces apartheid

After the Second World War there were important changes in the way black Africans were treated. Under Prime Minister Malan (1948–54), a new policy called *apartheid (separateness)* was introduced. This tightened up control over blacks still further. Why was apartheid introduced?

- When India and Pakistan were given independence in 1947, white South Africans became alarmed at the growing racial equality within the Commonwealth, and they were determined to preserve their supremacy.
- Most of the whites, especially those of Dutch origin, were against racial equality, but the most extreme were the Afrikaner Nationalist Party led by Dr Malan. They claimed that whites were a master race, and that non-whites were inferior beings. The Dutch Reformed Church (the official state church of South Africa) supported this view and quoted passages from the Bible which, they claimed, proved their theory. This was very much out of line with the rest of the Christian churches, which believe in racial equality. The Broederbond was a secret Afrikaner organization which worked to protect and preserve Afrikaner power.
- The Nationalists won the 1948 elections with promises to rescue the whites from the 'black menace' and to preserve the racial purity of the whites. This would help to ensure continued white supremacy.

(c) Apartheid developed further

Apartheid was continued and developed further by the prime ministers who followed Malan: Strijdom (1954–8), Verwoerd (1958–66) and Vorster (1966–78).

The main features of apartheid

- There was complete separation of blacks and whites as far as possible at all levels. In country areas blacks had to live in special reserves; in urban areas they had separate townships built at suitable distances from the white residential areas. If an existing black township was thought to be too close to a 'white' area, the whole community was uprooted and 're-grouped' somewhere else to make separation as complete as possible. There were separate buses, coaches, trains, cafés, toilets, park benches, hospitals, beaches, picnic areas, sports and even churches. Black children went to separate schools and were given a much inferior education. But there was a flaw in the system: complete separation was impossible because over half the non-white population worked in white-owned mines, factories and other businesses. The economy would have collapsed if all non-whites had been moved to reserves. In addition, virtually every white household had at least two African servants.
- Every person was given a racial classification and an identity card. There were strict pass laws which meant that black Africans had to stay in their reserves or in their townships unless they were travelling to a white area to work, in which case they would be issued with passes. Otherwise all travelling was forbidden without police permission.
- Marriage and sexual relations between whites and non-whites were forbidden; this was to preserve the purity of the white race. Police spied shamelessly on anybody suspected of breaking the rules.

- The Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) set up seven regions called Bantustans, based on the original African reserves. It was claimed that they would eventually move towards self-government. In 1969 it was announced that the first Bantustan, the Transkei, had become 'independent'. However, the outside world dismissed this with contempt since the South African government continued to control the Transkei's economy and foreign affairs. The whole policy was criticized because the Bantustan areas covered only about 13 per cent of the country's total area; over 8 million black people were crammed into these relatively small areas, which were vastly overcrowded and unable to support the black populations adequately. They became very little better than rural slums, but the government ignored the protests and continued its policy; by 1980 two more African 'homelands', Bophuthatswana and Venda, had received 'independence'.
- Africans lost all political rights, and their representation in parliament, which had been by white MPs, was abolished.

(d) Opposition to apartheid

1 Inside South Africa

Inside South Africa, opposition to the system was difficult. Anyone who objected – including whites – or broke the apartheid laws, was accused of being a communist and was severely punished under the Suppression of Communism Act. Africans were forbidden to strike, and their political party, the African National Congress (ANC), was helpless. In spite of this, protests did take place.

- Chief Albert Luthuli, the ANC leader, organized a protest campaign in which black Africans stopped work on certain days. In 1952 Africans attempted a systematic breach of the laws by entering shops and other places reserved for whites. Over 8000 blacks were arrested and many were flogged. Luthuli was deprived of his chieftaincy and put in jail for a time, and the campaign was called off.
- In 1955 the ANC formed a coalition with Asian and coloured groups, and at a massive open-air meeting at Kliptown (near Johannesburg), they just had time to announce a freedom charter before police broke up the crowd. The charter soon became the main ANC programme. It began by declaring: 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and no government can claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.' It went on to demand:

  - equality before the law;
  - freedom of assembly, movement, speech, religion and the press;
  - the right to vote;
  - the right to work, with equal pay for equal work;
  - a 40-hour working week, a minimum wage and unemployment benefits;
  - free medical care;
  - free, compulsory and equal education.

- Church leaders and missionaries, both black and white, spoke out against apartheid. They included people like Trevor Huddleston, a British missionary who had been working in South Africa since 1943.
- Later the ANC organized other protests, including the 1957 bus boycott: instead of paying a fare increase on the bus route from their township to Johannesburg ten

miles away, thousands of Africans walked to work and back for three months until fares were reduced.

- Protests reached a climax in 1960 when a huge demonstration took place against the pass laws at Sharpeville, an African township near Johannesburg. Police fired on the crowd, killing 67 Africans and wounding many more. After this, 15 000 Africans were arrested and hundreds of people were beaten by police. This was an important turning point in the campaign: until then most of the protests had been non-violent; but this brutal treatment by the authorities convinced many black leaders that violence could only be met with violence.
- A small action group of the ANC, known as *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation), or MK, was launched; Nelson Mandela was a prominent member. They organized a campaign of sabotaging strategic targets: in 1961 there was a spate of bomb attacks in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban. But the police soon clamped down, arresting most of the black leaders, including Mandela, who was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. Chief Luthuli still persevered with non-violent protests, and after publishing his moving autobiography *Let My People Go*, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He was killed in 1967, the authorities claiming that he had deliberately stepped in front of a train.
- Discontent and protest increased again in the 1970s because the wages of Africans failed to keep pace with inflation. In 1976, when the Transvaal authorities announced that Afrikaans (the language spoken by whites of Dutch descent) was to be used in black African schools, massive demonstrations took place at Soweto, a black township near Johannesburg. Although there were many children and young people in the crowd, police opened fire, killing at least 200 black Africans. This time the protests did not die down; they spread over the whole country. Again the government responded with brutality: over the next six months a further 500 Africans were killed; among the victims was Steve Biko, a young African leader who had been urging people to be proud of their blackness. He was beaten to death by police (1976).

2 Outside South Africa

Outside South Africa there was opposition to apartheid from the rest of the Commonwealth. Early in 1960 the British Conservative prime minister, Harold Macmillan, had the courage to speak out against it in Cape Town; he spoke about the growing strength of African nationalism: 'the wind of change is blowing through the continent … our national policies must take account of it'. His warnings were ignored, and shortly afterwards, the world was horrified by the Sharpeville massacre. At the 1961 Commonwealth Conference, criticism of South Africa was intense, and many thought the country would be expelled. In the end Verwoerd withdrew South Africa's application for continued membership (in 1960 it had become a republic instead of a dominion, thereby severing the connection with the British crown; because of this the government had had to apply for readmission to the Commonwealth), and it ceased to be a member of the Commonwealth.

3 The UN and OAU

The United Nations and the Organization of African Unity condemned apartheid and were particularly critical of the continued South African occupation of South West Africa. The UN voted to place an economic boycott on South Africa (1962), but this proved useless because not all member states supported it. Britain, the USA, France, West Germany and Italy condemned apartheid in public, but continued to trade with South Africa. Among other things, they sold South Africa massive arms supplies, apparently hoping that it would prove to be a bastion against the spread of communism in Africa. Consequently Verwoerd

(until his assassination in 1966) and his successor Vorster (1966–78) were able to ignore the protests from the outside world until well into the 1970s.

(e) The end of apartheid

The system of apartheid continued without any concessions being made to black people, until 1980.

1 P. W. Botha

The new prime minister, P. W. Botha (elected 1979), realized that all was not well with the system. He decided that he must reform apartheid, dropping some of the most unpopular aspects in an attempt to preserve white control. What caused this change?

- Criticism from abroad (from the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity) gradually gathered momentum. External pressures became much greater in 1975 when the white-ruled Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique achieved independence after a long struggle. The African takeover of Zimbabwe (1980) removed the last of the white-ruled states which had been sympathetic to the South African government and apartheid. Now South Africa was surrounded by hostile black states, and many Africans in these new states had sworn never to rest until their fellow-Africans in South Africa had been liberated.
- There were economic problems – South Africa was hit by recession in the late 1970s, and many white people were worse off. Whites began to emigrate in large numbers, but the black population was increasing. In 1980 whites made up only 16 per cent of the population, whereas between the two world wars they had formed 21 per cent.
- The African homelands were a failure: they were poverty-stricken, their rulers were corrupt and no foreign government recognized them as genuinely independent states.
- The USA, which was treating its own black people better during the 1970s, began to criticize the South African government's racist policy.

In a speech in September 1979 which astonished many of his Nationalist supporters, the newly elected Prime Minister Botha said:

> A revolution in South Africa is no longer just a remote possibility. Either we adapt or we perish. White domination and legally enforced apartheid are a recipe for permanent conflict.

He went on to suggest that the black homelands must be made viable and that unnecessary discrimination must be abolished. Gradually he introduced some important changes which he hoped would be enough to silence the critics both inside and outside South Africa.

- Blacks were allowed to join trade unions and to go on strike (1979).
- Blacks were allowed to elect their own local township councils (but not to vote in national elections) (1981).
- A new constitution was introduced, setting up two new houses of parliament, one for coloureds and one for Asians (but not for Africans). The new system was weighted so that the whites kept overall control. It came into force in 1984.
- Sexual relations and marriage were allowed between people of different races (1985).
- The hated pass laws for non-whites were abolished (1986).

This was as far as Botha was prepared to go. He would not even consider the ANC's main demands (the right to vote and to play a full part in ruling the country). Far from being won over by these concessions, black Africans were incensed that the new constitution made no provision for them, and were determined to settle for nothing less than full political rights.

Violence escalated, with both sides guilty of excesses. The ANC used the 'necklace', a tyre placed round the victim's neck and set on fire, to murder black councillors and black police, who were regarded as collaborators with apartheid. On the 25th anniversary of Sharpeville, police opened fire on a procession of black mourners going to a funeral near Uitenhage (Port Elizabeth), killing over forty people (March 1985). In July a state of emergency was declared in the worst affected areas, and it was extended to the whole country in June 1986. This gave the police the power to arrest people without warrants, and freedom from all criminal proceedings; thousands of people were arrested, and newspapers, radio and TV were banned from reporting demonstrations and strikes.

However, as so often happens when an authoritarian regime tries to reform itself, it proved impossible to stop the process of change (the same happened in the USSR when Gorbachev tried to reform communism). By the late 1980s international pressure on South Africa was having more effect, and internal attitudes had changed.

- In August 1986 the Commonwealth (except Britain) agreed on a strong package of sanctions (no further loans, no sales of oil, computer equipment or nuclear goods to South Africa, and no cultural and scientific contacts). British prime minister Margaret Thatcher would commit Britain only to a voluntary ban on investment in South Africa. Her argument was that severe economic sanctions would worsen the plight of black Africans, who would be thrown out of their jobs. This caused the rest of the Commonwealth to feel bitter against Britain; Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian prime minister, accused Mrs Thatcher of 'compromising on basic principles and values for economic ends'.
- In September 1986 the USA joined the fray when Congress voted (over President Reagan's veto) to stop American loans to South Africa, to cut air links and to ban imports of iron, steel, coal, textiles and uranium from South Africa.
- The black population was no longer just a mass of uneducated and unskilled labourers; there was a steadily growing number of well-educated, professional, middle-class black people, some of them holding important positions, like Desmond Tutu, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 and became Anglican archbishop of Cape Town in 1986.
- The Dutch Reformed Church, which had once supported apartheid, now condemned it as incompatible with Christianity. A majority of white South Africans now recognized that it was difficult to defend the total exclusion of blacks from the country's political life. So although they were nervous about what might happen, they became resigned to the idea of black majority rule at some time in the future. White moderates were therefore prepared to make the best of the situation and get the best deal possible.

2 F. W. de Klerk

The new president, F. W. de Klerk (elected 1989), had a reputation for caution, but privately he had decided that apartheid would have to go completely, and he accepted that black majority rule must come eventually. The problem was how to achieve it without further violence and possible civil war. With great courage and determination, and in the

face of bitter opposition from right-wing Afrikaner groups, de Klerk gradually moved the country towards black majority rule.

- Nelson Mandela was released after 27 years in jail (1990) and became leader of the ANC, which was made legal.
- Most of the remaining apartheid laws were dropped.
- Namibia, the neighbouring territory ruled by South Africa since 1919, was given independence under a black government (1990).
- Talks began in 1991 between the government and the ANC to work out a new constitution which would allow blacks full political rights.

Meanwhile the ANC was doing its best to present itself as a moderate party which had no plans for wholesale nationalization, and to reassure whites that they would be safe and happy under black rule. Nelson Mandela condemned violence and called for reconciliation between blacks and whites. The negotiations were long and difficult; de Klerk had to face right-wing opposition from his own National Party and from various extreme, white racialist groups who claimed that he had betrayed them. The ANC was involved in a power struggle with another black party, the Natal-based Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party led by Chief Buthelezi.

3 Transition to black majority rule

In the spring of 1993 the talks were successful and a power-sharing scheme was worked out to carry through the transition to black majority rule. A general election was held and the ANC won almost two-thirds of the votes. As had been agreed, a coalition government of the ANC, National Party and Inkatha took office, with Nelson Mandela as the first black president of South Africa, two vice-presidents, one black and one white (Thabo Mbeki and F. W. de Klerk), and Chief Buthelezi as Home Affairs Minister (May 1994). A right-wing Afrikaner group, led by Eugene Terreblanche, continued to oppose the new democracy, vowing to provoke civil war, but in the end it came to nothing. Although there had been violence and bloodshed, it was a remarkable achievement, for which both de Klerk and Mandela deserve the credit, that South Africa was able to move from apartheid to black majority rule without civil war.

(f) Mandela and Mbeki

The government faced daunting problems and was expected to deliver on the promises in the ANC programme, especially to improve conditions for the black population. Plans were put into operation to raise their general standard of living – in education, housing, health care, water and power supplies and sanitation. But the scale of the problem was so vast that it would be many years before standards would show improvement for everybody. In May 1996 a new constitution was agreed, to come into operation after the elections of 1999, which would not allow minority parties to take part in the government. When this was revealed (May 1996), the Nationalists immediately announced that they would withdraw from the government to a ‘dynamic but responsible opposition’. As the country moved towards the millennium, the main problems facing the president were how to maintain sound financial and economic policies, and how to attract foreign aid and investment; potential investors were hesitant, awaiting future developments.

One of Mandela’s most successful initiatives was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which looked into human rights abuses during the apartheid regime. Assisted

by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the commission's approach was not one of taking revenge, but of granting amnesties; people were encouraged to talk frankly, and to acknowledge their crimes and ask for forgiveness. This was one of the most admirable things about Mandela, that although he had been kept in prison under the apartheid regime for 27 years, he still believed in forgiveness and reconciliation. The president decided not to stand for re-election in 1999 – he was almost 81 years old; he retired with his reputation high, almost universally admired for his statesmanship and restraint.

Thabo Mbeki, who became ANC leader and president on Mandela's retirement, had a difficult job to follow such a charismatic leader. After winning the 1999 elections, Mbeki and the ANC had to deal with mounting problems: the crime rate soared, trade unions called strikes in protest against job losses, poor working conditions and the increasing rate of privatization. The economic growth rate was slowing down: in 2001 it was only 1.5 per cent compared with 3.1 in 2000. The government came under special criticism for its handling of the AIDS epidemic. Mbeki was slow to recognize that there really was a crisis and claimed that AIDS was not necessarily linked to HIV; he refused to declare a state of emergency, as opposition parties and trade unions demanded. This would have enabled South Africa to obtain cheaper medicines, but the government seemed unwilling to spend large amounts of cash on the necessary drugs. There was uproar in October 2001 when a report claimed that AIDS was now the main cause of death in South Africa, and that if the trend continued, at least 5 million people would have died from it by 2010.

As the 2004 elections approached, there were many positive signs in the new South Africa. Government policies were beginning to show results: 70 per cent of black households had electricity, the number of people with access to pure water had increased by 9 million since 1994, and about 2000 new houses for poor people had been built. Education was free and compulsory and many black people said that they felt they now had dignity, instead of being treated like animals, as they had been under apartheid. The economic situation appeared brighter: South Africa was diversifying its exports instead of relying on gold and there was a growing tourist industry; the budget deficit had fallen sharply and inflation was down to 4 per cent. The main problems were still AIDS – it was reported that in 2005 South Africa was the country with the most HIV-positive people in the world, 6.5 million; high unemployment levels and the high crime rate. However, in the election of April 2004, Mbeki was re-elected for a second and final five-year term as president and his ANC won a landslide victory, taking around two-thirds of the votes cast.

During Mbeki's second term it was the problems rather than the progress that gained most of the publicity. There was an influx of migrants and refugees, mainly from Zimbabwe, but also from Rwanda, the Congo, Somalia and Ethiopia. With unemployment already high and housing in short supply, this has caused competition for jobs and living accommodation, especially in the shanty towns that surround most large cities. In May 2008 there were serious protest riots directed against immigrants, and at least 80 people were killed. The more left-wing ANC supporters felt that there had been too little progress in the redistribution of wealth. In May 2009 South Africa's unemployment rate had reached 25 per cent and those out of work were forced to live on less than US$1.25 a day. Mbeki's second term was also marred by a feud with his vice-president Jacob Zuma. In 2005 Mbeke sacked him after Zuma was accused of corruption, including fraud and money-laundering. In December 2007 Zuma, still a very popular figure, defeated Mbeke in the election for president of the ANC. When Zuma was acquitted on the corruption charges, the ANC National Executive Committee voted that Mbeke was no longer fit to lead the country, the implication being that the charges against Zuma had been trumped up in order to get him removed. Mbeke immediately resigned and in May 2009 Zuma was elected president. He was firmly on the left-wing of the ANC and had once been a member of the South African Communist Party. Now he could rely on solid support from the trade

unions and the communists. His programme included a pledge to fight poverty and narrow the poverty gap, given that South Africa was tenth in the world list of countries with the widest gap between rich and poor.

The president suffered a setback in August 2012 when police shot and killed 34 striking platinum miners at the Marikana mine, near Johannesburg. Poorly paid and working in difficult conditions, the miners were demanding wage increases from the mine-owners, a British company called Lonmin. To make matters worse, 270 miners were arrested and charged with the murder of their colleagues, on the grounds that their behaviour had caused the police action. A wave of outrage followed and President Zuma came under severe criticism for his handling of the crisis. Although the charges were later dropped, critics claimed that he was an ineffective leader, more interested in protecting the industry rather than helping the poverty-stricken miners and working to narrow the poverty gap. In December 2012 he was re-elected leader of the ANC for another five years. However, many observers see his continuing presence as the party's Achilles heel. According to the *Guardian* (18 December 2012), Zuma is 'a man steeped in corruption and personal scandal'.

25.9 ETHIOPIA

(a) Haile Selassie

Ethiopia (Abyssinia) was an independent state, ruled since 1930 by the Emperor Haile Selassie. In 1935 Mussolini's forces attacked and occupied the country, forcing the Emperor into exile. The Italians joined Ethiopia to their neighbouring colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, calling them Italian East Africa. In 1941, with British help, Haile Selassie was able to defeat the weak Italian forces and return to his capital, Addis Ababa. The wily emperor scored a great success in 1952 when he persuaded the UN and the USA to allow him to take over Eritrea, giving his landlocked country access to the sea. However, this was to be a source of conflict for many years, since Eritrean nationalists bitterly resented the loss of their country's independence.

By 1960 many people were growing impatient with Haile Selassie's rule, believing that more could have been done politically, socially and economically to modernize the country. Rebellions broke out in Eritrea and in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, where many of the population were Somali nationalists who were keen for their territories to join Somalia (which had become independent in 1960). Haile Selassie hung on to power, without introducing any radical changes, into the 1970s. Fuelled by poverty, drought and famine, unrest finally came to a head in 1974, when some sections of the army mutinied. The leaders formed themselves into the Co-ordinating Committee of the Armed Forces and Police (known as the Derg for short), whose chairman was Major Mengistu. In September 1974, the Derg deposed the 83-year-old emperor, who was later murdered, and set itself up as the new government. Mengistu gained complete control and remained head of state until 1991.

(b) Major Mengistu and the Derg

Mengistu and the Derg gave Ethiopia 16 years of government based on Marxist principles. Most of the land, industry, trade, banking and finance were taken over by the state. Opponents were usually executed. The USSR saw the arrival of Mengistu as an excellent chance to gain influence in that part of Africa, and they provided armaments and training for Mengistu's army. Unfortunately the regime's agricultural policy ran

into the same problems as Stalin's collectivization in the USSR; in 1984 and 1985 there were terrible famines, and it was only prompt action by other states, rushing in emergency food supplies, which averted disaster. Mengistu's main problem was the civil war, which dragged on throughout his period in power and swallowed up his scarce resources. In spite of the help from the USSR, he was fighting a losing battle against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). By 1989 the government had lost control of Eritrea and Tigray, and Mengistu admitted that his socialist policies had failed; Marxism–Leninism was to be abandoned. The USSR deserted him; in May 1991, with rebel forces closing in on Addis Ababa, Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe and the EPRDF took power.

(c) The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)

The new government, while maintaining some elements of socialism (especially state control of important resources), promised democracy and less centralization. The leader, Meles Zenawi, who was a Tigrayan, announced the introduction of a voluntary federation for the various nationalities; this meant that ethnic groups could leave Ethiopia if they chose, and it prepared the way for Eritrea to declare its independence in May 1993. This was one less problem for the regime to deal with, but there were many others. Most serious was the state of the economy, and yet another dreadful famine in 1994. In 1998 war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea over frontier disputes. Even the weather was uncooperative: in the spring of 2000 the rains failed for the third year in succession, and another famine threatened. Although a peace settlement with Eritrea was signed in December 2000, tensions remained high.

Events in 2001 suggested that Ethiopia might have turned the corner, at least economically. Prime Minister Zenawi and his EPRDF, who had easily won the national elections in May 2000, went on to register another landslide victory in the local elections in 2001. The economy grew by 6.5 per cent, the rains arrived on time and there was a good harvest. The World Bank helped by cancelling almost 70 per cent of Ethiopia's debt. Zenawi won the 2005 elections, though there were allegations of fraud followed by riots and protest demonstrations in which at least 200 people were killed. The opposition accused the police of massacring protesters, while the government blamed one of the main opposition parties, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), for organizing the protests. In fact the majority of foreign observers declared that the elections were basically free and fair. With Zenawi in charge for the next five years, economic growth continued, but at the end of 2006 Ethiopia became involved in war with neighbouring Somalia. In the south of Somalia, bordering on Ethiopia, Islamist groups were fighting against the National Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, which was supported by the USA. It was suspected that these Islamist groups had links with al-Qaeda, and Ethiopia had already allowed the USA to station military advisers at Camp Hurso, where they had spent a year training the Ethiopian army. In December 2006 the Ethiopians took the offensive, forced the Islamists to retreat and occupied the areas formerly under Islamist control. They pulled out in January 2009, leaving behind a small African Union force and a small detachment of the Somali army. But they were not strong enough to keep the Islamists at bay, and they soon began to take back control of southern Somalia. Re-elected in 2010 for a further five-year term, Zenawi died in August 2012 aged only 57. His deputy, Hailemariam Desalegn, took over, and was expected to remain prime minister until the next elections, due in 2015. However, there were fears that, since the new prime minister lacked the experience, the prestige and the charisma of Mr Zenawi, the country was in for a difficult few years.

25.10 LIBERIA

(a) Early history

Liberia has a unique history among African states. It was founded in 1822 by an organization called the American Colonization Society, whose members thought it would be a good idea to settle freed slaves in Africa where, by rights, they ought to have been living in the first place. They persuaded several local chieftains to allow them to start a settlement in West Africa. The initial training of the freed slaves to prepare them for running their own country was carried out by white Americans, led by Jehudi Ashmun. Liberia was given a constitution based on that of the USA, and the capital was named Monrovia after James Monroe, US president from 1817 until 1825. Although the system appeared to be democratic, in practice only the descendants of American-freed slaves were allowed to vote. The native Africans in the area were treated as second-class citizens, just as they were in the areas colonized by Europeans. In the late 1920s there was a scandal when the US State Department accused the Liberian government of selling large numbers of these citizens into slavery. The League of Nations carried out an investigation and in 1930 published a report showing that this was indeed the case. There were probably mixed motives: to make money for the poverty-stricken government and to get rid of troublemakers from native tribes in the interior. The president, Charles King, was forced to resign, but a further investigation in 1935, this time by the Anti-Slavery Society, showed that the practice was still going on. One of the investigators was the British novelist, Graham Greene.

Liberia gained new importance during the Second World War because of its rubber plantations, which were a vital source of natural latex rubber for the Allies. The Americans poured cash into the country and built roads, harbours and an international airport at Monrovia. In 1943, William Tubman of the True Whig Party – the only major political party – was elected president; he was continually re-elected and remained president until his death in 1971, shortly after his election for a seventh term. He presided over a largely peaceful country, which became a member of the UN and a founder member of the Organization of African Unity (1963). But the economy was always precarious; there was little industry and Liberia depended heavily on her exports of rubber and iron ore. Another source of income came from allowing foreign merchant ships to register under the Liberian flag. Shipowners were keen to do this because Liberia's rules and safety regulations were the most lax in the world and the registration fees among the lowest.

(b) Military dictatorship and civil war

President Tubman was succeeded by his vice-president, William Tolbert, but during his presidency things began to go badly wrong. There was a fall in the world prices of rubber and iron ore and the ruling elite came under increasing criticism for its corruption. Opposition groups developed and in 1980 the army staged a coup, led by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe. Tolbert was overthrown and executed in public along with his ministers, and Doe became head of state. He promised a new constitution and a return to civilian rule, but was in no hurry to relinquish power. Although elections were held in 1985, Doe made sure that he and his supporters won. His ruthless regime aroused determined opposition and a number of rebel groups emerged; by 1989 Liberia was engaged in a bloody civil war. The rebel armies were poorly disciplined and guilty of indiscriminate shooting and looting. In spite of efforts by neighbouring West African states which intervened in an attempt to bring peace, Doe was captured and killed (1990); but this did not end the war: two of the rebel groups, led by Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson (the man responsible for Doe's

murder), fought each other for control of the country. Altogether this devastating conflict raged on for seven years; new rival factions appeared; at one point Taylor's forces invaded Sierra Leone which he accused of backing Prince Johnson who controlled the capital, Monrovia. The Organization of African Unity tried to broker talks under the chairmanship of former Zimbabwean president Canaan Banana; but it was not until 1996 that a ceasefire was agreed. Taylor succeeded in winning the support of Nigeria and announced that he wanted to be a conciliator.

Elections held in 1997 resulted in a decisive victory for Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia Party. He faced an unenviable task: the country was literally in ruins, its economy was totally disrupted and its peoples were divided. Nor did the situation improve. Taylor soon found himself at odds with much of the outside world: the USA criticized his human rights record and the European Union claimed that he was helping the rebels in Sierra Leone. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the USA accused him of harbouring members of al-Qaeda. Taylor denied all these charges and accused the USA of trying to undermine his government. The UN voted to impose a worldwide ban on the trade in Liberian diamonds.

By the spring of 2002 the country was once again in the grip of civil war as rebel forces in the north launched a campaign to overthrow Taylor. Again the ordinary people suffered appallingly: by the end of the year, 40 000 had fled the country and a further 300 000 were only kept alive by food aid from the UN. In August 2003 the UN Security Council decided to send security forces into Liberia and about a thousand Nigerian troops were airlifted into Monrovia to prevent rebel forces taking it. Taylor resigned and took refuge in Nigeria. All the various factions met and signed a peace agreement. There was to be a two-year transitional period, during which a UN force of 3500 troops from several West African countries would keep the peace. Democratic elections were held in October and November 2005 in which the final run-off was won by Ellen Johnson-Shirleaf, who became Africa's first female head of state. She had been educated at Harvard, and had worked as an economist for the World Bank.

In 2006 ex-president Charles Taylor was handed over to an international court at the Hague and charged with crimes against humanity alleged to have been committed in the 1990s when he intervened to support the rebels in the civil war in Sierra Leone. In April 2012 he was found guilty of being responsible for murder, rape, sexual slavery and conscription of child soldiers. He was sentenced to 50 years in prison. Meanwhile in 2011 president Johnson-Shirleaf was a joint winner, along with two other African female politicians from Liberia and Yemen, of the Nobel Peace Prize for their work for the safety of women and for women's rights. Later in the year she was re-elected president for a second term.

25.11 SIERRA LEONE

(a) Early prosperity and stability

Sierra Leone became independent in 1961 with Sir Milton Margai as leader and with a democratic constitution based on the British model. It was potentially one of the richest states in Africa, with valuable iron-ore deposits and diamonds; later gold was discovered. Sadly, the enlightened and gifted Margai, widely seen as the founding father of Sierra Leone, died in 1964. His brother, Sir Albert Margai, took over as leader, but in the election of 1967, his party (the Sierra Leone People's Party – SLPP) was defeated by the All-People's Congress (APC) and its leader Siaka Stevens. In a foretaste of the future, the army removed the new prime minister and installed a military government. This had only been in place for a year when some sections of the army mutinied, imprisoned their

officers and restored Stevens and the APC to power. Stevens remained president until his retirement in 1985.

Sierra Leone under Siaka Stevens enjoyed peace and stability, but gradually the situation deteriorated in a number of ways.

- Corruption and mismanagement crept in and the ruling elite lined their own pockets at public expense.
- The deposits of iron ore ran out, and the diamond trade, which should have filled the state treasury, fell into the hands of smugglers, who siphoned off most of the profits.
- As criticism of the government increased, Stevens resorted to dictatorial methods. Many political opponents were executed, and in 1978 all political parties except the APC were banned.

(b) Chaos and catastrophe

When Stevens retired in 1985 he took care to appoint as his successor another strong man, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, Joseph Momoh. His regime was so blatantly corrupt and his economic policies so disastrous that in 1992 he was overthrown, and replaced by a group calling itself the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The new head of state, Captain Valentine Strasser, accused Momoh of bringing the country 'permanent poverty and a deplorable life', and promised to restore genuine democracy as soon as possible.

Unfortunately the country was already moving towards the tragic civil war, which was to last into the next century. A rebel force calling itself the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was organizing in the south, under the leadership of Foday Sankoh. He had been an army corporal who, according to Peter Penfold (a former British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone), 'brainwashed his young followers on a diet of coercion, drugs, and unrealistic promises of gold'. His forces had been causing trouble since 1991, but the violence intensified; Sankoh rejected all calls to negotiate, and by the end of 1994 the Strasser government was in difficulties. Early in 1995 there were reports of fierce fighting all over the country, although Freetown (the capital) was still calm. An estimated 900 000 people had been driven from their homes and at least 30 000 had taken refuge in neighbouring Guinea.

In desperation Strasser offered to hold democratic elections and to sign a truce with the RUF. This produced a lull in the fighting and preparations went ahead for elections to be held in February 1996. However, some sections of the army were unwilling to give up power to a civilian government, and a few days before the election they overthrew Strasser. Nevertheless, voting went ahead, though there was serious violence, especially in Freetown, where 27 people were killed. There were reports of mutinous soldiers firing at civilians as they queued up to vote, and chopping off the hands of some people who had voted. In spite of intimidation, 60 per cent of the electorate voted. The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) emerged as the largest party and its leader, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, was elected president. Enormous crowds celebrated in Freetown when the army formally handed over authority to the new president, after 19 years of one-party and military rule. President Kabbah pledged to end violence and corruption and offered to meet RUF leaders. In November 1996, he and Sankoh signed a peace agreement.

Just as it seemed that peace was about to return, the country was plunged into further chaos when a group of army officers seized power (May 1997), forcing Kabbah to take refuge in Guinea. The new president, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, abolished the constitution and banned political parties. Sierra Leone was suspended from the Commonwealth and the UN imposed economic sanctions until the country returned to democracy. Nigerian

forces fighting on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) drove Koroma's military regime out and restored Kabbah (March 1998).

But this was not the end of Sierra Leone's misery. The RUF resurrected itself and was joined by troops loyal to Koroma. They advanced on Freetown, which they reached in January 1999. Then followed the most appalling events of the entire civil war: in a ten-day period about 7000 people were murdered, thousands more were raped or had their arms and legs hacked off, about a third of the capital was destroyed and tens of thousands were left homeless. Eventually Kabbah and Sankoh signed a peace agreement in Lomé, the capital of Togo (July 1999), providing for a power-sharing system and granting an amnesty for the rebels. This provoked strong criticism from human rights groups in view of the terrible atrocities committed by some of the rebels. The UN Security Council voted to send 6000 troops to Sierra Leone to supervise the implementation of peace. Unbelievably, in May 2000 Sankoh, who had become a member of Kabbah's cabinet, ordered his rebel troops to march on Freetown and overthrow the Kabbah government. This was prevented by the timely arrival of British troops sent by UK prime minister Tony Blair. In October 2000 this number had to be increased to 20 000, since many of the RUF fighters refused to accept the terms of the settlement and continued to cause havoc. British troops joined the UN forces and played an important part in the final defeat of the rebels. Sankoh was captured and died in prison in 2003. The job of disarmament was slow and difficult, but violence gradually subsided and something approaching calm was restored. In January 2002, the war was officially declared to be over; it was estimated that 50 000 people had been killed during ten years of conflict.

However, peace was fragile, and the UN kept 17 000 troops in the country, and some of the British contingent stayed in case of renewed violence. In May 2002 President Kabbah was re-elected, winning 70 per cent of the votes. In 2004 it was announced that all rebel troops had been disarmed and the UN opened a war crimes tribunal. But the country's economy was in ruins, the infrastructure needed rebuilding, and in 2003 the UN rated it as one of the five poorest countries in the world.

The constitution did not allow President Kabbah to run for a third consecutive term, and his party, the Sierra Leonean People's Party (SLPP), chose the vice-president, Solomon Berewa, as their candidate in the elections of September 2007. He was unexpectedly defeated by the All People's Party (APC) candidate, Ernest Bai Koroma. He promised that corruption would not be tolerated and that the country's resources would be used in the best interests of all citizens. Further work was done to restore the country's infrastructure and more resources were put into the healthcare system. In April 2010 a new free healthcare system was introduced for pregnant women, mothers and babies, and children under 5. In 2008, after an aircraft carrying around 700 kg of cocaine was stopped at Freetown airport, President Koroma took action against the increasing number of drug cartels, many of them from Colombia, which had started to use Sierra Leone as a base from which to ship drugs to Europe. The minister for transport was suspended and stricter punishments and longer gaol sentences were introduced for offenders. As the 2012 elections approached, there was still a long way to go before Sierra Leone came anywhere near fulfilling its potential.

25.12 ZIMBABWE

(a) An impressive beginning, 1980–90

Robert Mugabe, prime minister of the newly independent Zimbabwe, had been an uncompromising guerrilla leader with Marxist opinions. He soon showed that he was capable of moderation, and pledged himself to work for reconciliation and unity. This calmed the fears of the white farmers and businessmen who had remained in Zimbabwe

and who were necessary for the economy to flourish. He formed a coalition government between his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), whose main support came from the Shona people, and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), supported by the Ndebele people in Matabeleland. He kept his promise made at the Lancaster House Conference that the whites should have 20 guaranteed seats in the 100-seat parliament. Measures were introduced to alleviate the poverty of the black population – wage increases, food subsidies and better social services, health care and education. Many commentators felt that in his first few years in power, Mugabe showed great statesmanship and deserved credit for keeping his country relatively peaceful.

Nevertheless there were problems to be dealt with. The most serious in the early years was the long-standing hostility between ZANU and ZAPU. The Shona people of ZANU felt that ZAPU could have done more to help during the struggle for black majority rule. The coalition between Mugabe and Nkomo was uneasy, and in 1982 Nkomo was accused of planning a coup. Mugabe forced him to resign and had many leading members of ZAPU arrested. Nkomo's supporters in Matabeleland retaliated with violence, but were brutally suppressed. However, resistance continued until 1987 when at last the two leaders reached agreement – the so-called Unity Accord:

- ZANU and ZAPU united and became known as the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF);
- Mugabe became executive president and Nkomo became a vice-president in a power-sharing scheme;
- reserved seats for whites in parliament were abolished.

The other worrying problem was the state of the economy. Although in years of good harvests Zimbabwe was regarded as 'the breadbasket of southern Africa', success depended heavily on the weather. During the 1980s there were more than the usual periods of drought, and the country also suffered from the high world price of oil. It was becoming clear that although Mugabe was a clever politician, his economic skills were not so impressive. Since the 1987 Unity Accord, he had been pushing to turn Zimbabwe into a one-party state. However, this was thwarted when Edgar Tekere formed his Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1989. Nevertheless, in 1990 Mugabe was still immensely popular and regarded as a hero by much of the population because of his vital role in the struggle for freedom. In 1990 he was re-elected president in a landslide victory over ZUM.

(b) The hero's image begins to tarnish

During the 1990s Zimbabwe's economic problems worsened. After the collapse of the USSR, Mugabe abandoned most of his Marxist policies and attempted to follow western free-market methods. He accepted a loan from the IMF and, very much against public opinion, agreed to abide by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme it imposed. This involved unpopular cuts in public spending on social services and jobs. Difficulties were compounded in 1992 by a severe drought, bringing a poor harvest and food shortages. More problems were caused when squatters occupied hundreds of white-owned farms. About 4000 white farmers had stayed on in Zimbabwe after independence, and between them they owned about half the country's arable land. The government encouraged the squatters and the police gave the farmers no protection; consequently the areas occupied by squatters were not cultivated, and this added to the food supply problem. Unemployment and inflation rose and the spread of AIDS began to cause concern.

By the late 1990s unrest was growing. Mugabe's intervention to help President Laurent Kabila in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was unpopular, since it

was widely rumoured that his motive was to protect his own personal investments in that country. In November 1998 there were protest demonstrations when it was announced that Mugabe had awarded himself and his cabinet large pay increases.

(c) Opposition increases

Around the turn of the century, opposition to the regime increased as Mugabe's rule became more repressive and dictatorial.

- In February 2000, men claiming to be veterans of the war for independence began the systematic and violent occupation of white-owned farms. This continued throughout the next four years, and was clearly a deliberate policy organized by the government. When the UK government protested, Mugabe claimed that it was the fault of the British: they had broken their promise (made during the 1979 Lancaster House Conference) to provide adequate compensation to white farmers. Britain declared itself willing to pay extra compensation provided that the confiscated land was given to ordinary peasant farmers rather than to members of Mugabe's ruling elite.
- Another proviso was that the elections due in June 2000 were free and fair. In February 2000, the people had rejected a new pro-Mugabe draft constitution, a clear indication that his popularity had dwindled. This probably led him to take whatever measures were necessary to win the June elections. Although he had agreed that they should be free and fair, he apparently did little to make sure that this happened. There was widespread violence and intimidation of the opposition before and during the election, and international observers were severely restricted. Even so, the result was close: Mugabe's ZANU-PF won 62 seats in the 150-seat parliament, while the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) won 57. The MDC had support from trade unions and by the prominent, but mainly white Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU). However, the president had the right to nominate 30 of the 150 members, and so Mugabe maintained a comfortable majority.
- The forcible occupation of white-owned farms continued during 2001, bringing more protests from the UK and the USA. Mugabe accused the British government of running a neo-colonial and racist campaign, supporting whites against blacks. The dispute brought mixed reactions from the rest of the world. The majority of black African states expressed sympathy and support for Mugabe. President Mbeki of South Africa, on the other hand, claimed that the land seizures were a violation of the rule of law, and ought to stop; but he urged a conciliatory approach and refused to apply economic sanctions against Zimbabwe, since these would only ruin the already ailing economy. However, the EU condemned Mugabe's policy and imposed sanctions (February 2002), the Commonwealth expelled Zimbabwe for one year, and the World Bank cut off its funding because of Zimbabwe's huge debt arrears, which had risen to over $380 million.
- Meanwhile, Mugabe took steps to muzzle the mounting criticism of his policies within Zimbabwe. There was now only one independent daily newspaper, the *Daily News*, and its journalists were increasingly harassed and intimidated, as were members of the MDC. Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC leader, was charged with plotting to overthrow the president, and the government tightened its control over TV and radio. When the Supreme Court ventured to criticize Mugabe's land policy, he sacked three of the judges and replaced them with his own nominees. As the presidential election of March 2002 approached, restrictions were tightened further. Public meetings were banned, except those of Mugabe's supporters, and it became

an offence 'to undermine the authority of the president by making statements or publishing statements that provoke hostility'. No foreign observers were to be allowed into the country to monitor the elections.

During the election campaign ZANU-PF took the line that the MDC was a puppet political party being used by the West to destabilize the nationalist and fundamentally Marxist attempt to redistribute wealth in Zimbabwe. Jonathan Moyo, the Minister of Information and Publicity, accused the MDC of being unpatriotic because they supported the CFU in their attempts to derail Mugabe's land-redistribution exercise. It was no surprise when Mugabe won the election and was sworn in for a further six-year term, although he was 78 years old. He took 56 per cent of the vote while Morgan Tsvangirai could muster only 42 per cent. Tsvangirai immediately challenged the result, claiming that 'it was the biggest electoral fraud I've seen in my life'. He complained of terrorism, intimidation and harassment; tensions ran high as he demanded that the High Court overturn the result.

(d) Zimbabwe in crisis

Rejecting the opposition's accusations, President Mugabe declared a 'state of disaster' (April 2002) because of the food situation. The whole of Central Africa was suffering the effects of a prolonged drought, and the harvest was expected to be only half its usual size. Yet Mugabe continued with his controversial land-seizure policy, although agricultural experts pointed out that this would threaten the vital crop of winter wheat.

Protests against the government continued in various forms, and so did the suppression of criticism. Mugabe used almost every means possible to stay in power: war veterans, youth militias and members of the security forces were used to intimidate the opposition. In February 2003 the Cricket World Cup competition was held in Zimbabwe; in Zimbabwe's opening match, two of their players – one black and one white – wore black armbands in order, they said, to 'mourn the death of democracy in our beloved Zimbabwe. We cannot in all conscience take the field and ignore the fact that millions of our compatriots are starving, unemployed and oppressed.' They did not play for Zimbabwe again. Later in the month, 21 Christian church leaders were arrested when they tried to present a petition asking the police to behave with less violence and more regard for human rights.

But the opposition refused to be silenced; in March the MDC organized a mass protest across the whole country, demanding that Mugabe should either reform his regime or leave office. Many factories, banks and shops closed, but the government dismissed it as 'an act of terrorism'. It was reported that over 500 opposition members, including Gibson Sibanda, vice-president of the MDC, had been arrested. Supported by a number of Western countries, the MDC called for foreign intervention and appealed for the UN to get involved in future elections. They also called on neighbouring states, asking them to take a more active role in Zimbabwe's affairs. Through the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC), there were a number of attempts at mediation. Presidents Mbeki of South Africa and Obasanjo of Nigeria several times tried to persuade Mugabe to form a coalition government with the MDC, but although representatives of Mugabe and Tsvangirai held talks, no solution to the deadlock could be found. Mugabe insisted that Zimbabwe was a sovereign country which could run its own affairs without interference from other states; issues pertaining to Zimbabwe could only be solved by Zimbabweans themselves. He also argued that Western talk of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe was simply political rhetoric and part of a neo-colonial strategy to continue influencing what went on in Zimbabwe. Jonathan Moyo has linked the recent farm seizures to the 1970s war of liberation from British colonial rule. He described the farm takeovers as the third 'Chimurenga', a Shona word for the war of liberation, the first and

second Chimurenga being the wars started by black natives against white settlers during the 1890s and 1970s.

When the Commonwealth summit met in Abuja (Nigeria) in December 2003, the issue which dominated the conference was whether or not Zimbabwe's suspension should be lifted. Mugabe was hoping to split the Commonwealth along black–white lines, but after intense discussion, the majority of members, including many African countries, voted to continue the suspension. Bitterly disappointed, Mugabe withdrew Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth.

The tragedy was that by the summer of 2004, as well as the dire human rights situation, Zimbabwe's economy was in a state of collapse. It was reported that since the land reform programme began, agricultural production had fallen catastrophically: in 2003 the tobacco crop fell to less than a third of the 2000 crop; worst of all, the wheat crop was less than a quarter of the total in 2000, and the numbers of cattle on commercial farms fell from 1.2 million to a mere 150 000. Although the government claimed that 50 000 black families had been settled on commercial farms, the real figure was less than 5000. Many of the best farms had been given to the president's supporters; vast amounts of fertile land were lying uncultivated because of shortages of seeds, fertilizers and agricultural machinery. In May 2004, the unemployment rate stood at over 70 per cent and the inflation rate was over 600 per cent, one of the highest in the world. The EU decision to continue sanctions for a further year did nothing to help. As usual, the main victims were Zimbabwe's poverty-stricken, oppressed and neglected people.

In spite of all this, Mugabe's ZANU-PF party won a decisive victory in the parliamentary elections of April 2005, taking 78 seats out of the 120 contested. The opposition MDC could muster only 41 seats. With the 30 seats that the president could fill with his own appointments, he would have more than the two-thirds majority needed to change the constitution. A smiling Mugabe said that he would retire when he was 'a century old'. There was less violence than during the two previous elections, and South African observers reported that the proceedings had been free and fair. However, the MDC and many European observers claimed that there had been widespread abuses, fraud and intimidation of voters; they accused the South African government of turning a blind eye to the fraud in order to discourage the MDC from resorting to violence, which would destabilize South Africa's frontier with Zimbabwe. In fact, the MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, a former trade union leader, decided not to launch a legal challenge to the results and rejected calls for armed resistance. As the UK *Times* put it: 'It would be a brave group indeed which would openly confront the thugs of ZANU-PF.' In March 2007 when the MDC did criticize Mugabe and staged a protest march, Tsvangirai and several other protesters were arrested and beaten up and one of them was killed.

In 2008 both parliamentary and presidential elections were held. With the economy in dire straits, Mugabe's ZANU-PF suffered a narrow defeat by the MDC, and Mugabe himself came second to Morgan Tsvangirai in the first round of the election for president. However, Tsvangirai had narrowly failed to win the requisite 50 per cent to secure victory in the first round. A run-off took place almost two months after these results were announced. During that time ZANU-PF launched a campaign of violence against the MDC and its supporters in which 86 people were reported killed, hundreds injured and hundreds more driven from their homes. Five days before the run-off Tsvangirai announced that he had withdrawn from the contest; there was no point in running, he said, when the election would not be free and fair, and when the outcome would be decided by Mugabe himself. He claimed that his supporters risked being killed if they turned up to vote for him. Mugabe retorted that he had only withdrawn because he knew he would be humiliated in the vote. The run-off went ahead and predictably, since Tsvangirai was no longer a candidate, Mugabe took around 90 per cent of the votes. In June 2008 he was sworn in for a further term as president. There was widespread international condemnation of the result, and the

African Union insisted that the only fair outcome would be the formation of a government of national unity. Talks were held between ZANU-PF and the MDC under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and mediated by South African president Mbeki. In September 2008 a power-sharing agreement was signed: Mugabe was to remain as president, Tsvangirai was to become prime minister, both would share control of the police and Mugabe's ZANU-PF would be in control of the army.

Over the next four years the economy at last began to make some progress, although in June 2012 an MDC report stated that 'the transport system remains in a complete shambles'; all major roads were in need of upgrading and the secondary roads were full of potholes. At the same time the UN Human Rights Commissioner reported that in spite of the unity government, polarization was still very pronounced; she expressed grave concerns that the next elections, due in 2013, could turn into a repeat of the 2008 elections. Only a week after the Commissioner's visit an MDC official was murdered by ZANU-PF supporters and several others were severely beaten. Clearly Mugabe's conception of sovereignty has more to do with the perpetuation of his own rule than the protection and well-being of his people. In the words of one of the disaffected Anglican priests, in 2012:

> Zimbabweans continue to suffer under Mugabe's rule. There is general suffering across Zimbabwe, and unemployment is a serious problem in every part of the country. Moreover the involvement of the military in the politics of the country means that the idea of free and fair elections continues to be a fantasy in the minds of many Zimbabweans.

25.13 SOMALIA

(a) Somalia united

The territories occupied by the Somali people had been colonized in the nineteenth century by the French, British and Italians. By 1960 both Britain and Italy recognized the independence of their areas which were united to form the Republic of Somalia. There was a long history of frontier disputes between the Somalis in the south-west of the country neighbouring Kenya, and between the Somalis in the north-west of Somalia, bordering on the Ethiopian province of Ogaden, and the Ethiopian government. In 1963 a boundary commission recommended that the Somali-populated area bordering on Kenya should be included in the new Republic of Kenya. When the British government agreed to this there were protest riots across Somalia and the Somali government broke off diplomatic relations with Britain. This alarmed Ethiopia where border skirmishes had already occurred in Ogaden in 1962. The president of Sudan and the King of Morocco offered to mediate, and following talks in Khartoum, hostilities between Somalia and Ethiopia were suspended temporarily. However, sporadic border clashes continued until 1967 when President Kaunda of Zambia mediated more successfully. Meanwhile the small French colony of Djibouti, situated between Somalia and Eritrea, voted to remain separate as a member of the French Union. The French finally withdrew in 1975 and Djibouti became an independent republic in 1977. Though small, the new republic included the port of Djibouti, which was vital for the trade of the landlocked state of Ethiopia and extremely desirable for Somalia. The republic's population was mixed, consisting both of Ethiopians (Afars) and Somalis (Issas).

In October 1969 the Somali president Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke was assassinated and the army took over, with Major-General Mohamed Siad Barre as president. The

country's name was changed to the Somali Democratic Republic, but this did not solve one of its basic problems – it was divided into a large number of tribes or clans, and sub-tribes. Before independence these had only been held together by the colonial power, and after 1960 some tribes began to act more independently. The new president Siad Barre, a member of the Marehan tribe, aimed to reassert central control from the capital, Mogadishu, with himself as the uniting force. He gained the support of several other clans and introduced a programme of socialist reforms.

(b) War and civil war

In 1977, expecting help from the USA, President Siad Barre launched an ill-advised invasion of Ethiopia. When American help failed to materialize, his forces were easily driven back by the Ethiopians, who received support from the USSR and Cuba. After the Ethiopians had invaded Somalia in 1982, the country gradually deteriorated into a terrible civil war lasting well into the next century. The former British area in the north declared itself independent under President Muhammad Egal, though only Djibouti gave it official recognition. A number of tribes united and in 1991 forced Barre to leave the country. However, they immediately fell out again and continued to fight each other. The leading figures were now Muhammad Farah Aided, who was supported by Islamist groups, and Ali Mahdi Muhammad, whose forces controlled Mogadishu and who declared himself president.

Meanwhile the unfortunate population suffered famine, epidemics and drought; millions were forced to flee from their homes. At one point there were over 20 different aid agencies at work in the country. Sadly they were often terrorized and robbed by local militias, and at the end of 1992 a UN mission (known as UNOSOM) was sent to try to make sure that the aid reached the right people. This group was eventually enlarged to 28 000 (of which 8000 were from the USA) and given authority to disarm the warring factions. When this proved beyond them, the Americans decided it would be easier to back Ali Mahdi and eliminate Aided, rather than trying to bring the two together in peace talks. They were in for a great disappointment: an American force sent to arrest Aided failed to capture him and lost two helicopters and the lives of 18 teenage American soldiers. This was too much for President Clinton, who decided to pull all American troops out of Somalia. UNOSOM forces soon followed (1994). They had totally failed to disarm the militias and certainly to reunite the country. Aided was killed in 1996 but it seemed to make little difference. In reality, Somalia had no government, just a collection of warlords each ruling his own patch.

In 2000 it seemed that some progress was being made: a group of warlords met in Djibouti and set up a government, though at first it controlled only about 10 per cent of the country. In August 2004 a National Transitional Federal Parliament of 275 members was inaugurated for a five-year term and Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected president. The new government was forced to spend the first year based in Kenya, because Somalia itself was too violent, but eventually it was able to move to the town of Baidoa. More violence followed in 2006, this time caused by a group of Islamists calling themselves the Somali Islamic Courts Council (SICC). They seized Mogadishu and took control of most of the south. President Yusuf tried to reach a peace agreement with them, but no progress could be made. At this point the Ethiopian government intervened. They considered the Islamists to be a dangerous threat to their territory and to the region in general, and carried out a series of air strikes against them. Ethiopian troops joined the Somali government's struggling forces and together they regained control of Mogadishu. By the end of 2006 most of the Islamists had been forced out of Somalia. The Americans joined in, launching air strikes against the retreating Islamists whom they suspected of having links with al-Qaeda.

These were widely condemned in a number of Muslim countries which claimed that the Americans had killed more ordinary Somalis than Islamist rebels.

The Islamists soon regrouped and the militant wing of the SICC, known as Al-Shabab, grew much stronger in 2007. Supported by many local warlords, they recaptured much of the south. One encouraging sign for the beleaguered government was that many moderate Muslims supported it, and when President Yusuf resigned at the end of 2008, parliament elected Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, a moderate Muslim cleric, as the next president. In 2010 Al-Shabab announced that it acknowledged allegiance to al-Qaeda and in July it claimed responsibility for a bomb blast in a restaurant at Kampala, the capital of Uganda, which killed 75 people. Ugandan forces had been helping the Somali government, and the explosion was clearly meant as a warning to any other countries that might be considering similar assistance. Even the weather was cruel to the Somalis – in the summer of 2011 there was a prolonged drought. This caused a famine in most of the south where thousands were reported to have died from malnutrition and thousands more had migrated into neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia looking for food. The government had proved incapable of controlling the Somali pirates who had been terrorizing the seas off the coast of East Africa for many years. Since 2000 hundreds of vessels have been attacked, though only a small proportion of these resulted in successful hijackings. Many countries have joined an international task force to eliminate piracy. This had some success and the number of attacks was reduced, though in February 2012 pirates were still holding ten ships and 159 hostages. In September 2012 Sheikh Sharif Ahmed was unexpectedly defeated when MPs voted for Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the next president. He was described as being 'a more moderate Muslim' than his predecessor. He was an academic who had once worked for UNICEF.

25.14 THE SUDAN

At the end of the twentieth century no fewer than 17 African countries were experiencing crises of various kinds, and the UN rated Sudan as probably the worst. Since 1956, southern Sudan had been ravaged by civil war between the Arab-dominated government and the African tribes, many of whom were Christians. The Africans felt they were not receiving a fair deal; they had been refused the right to secede and had not even been allowed a certain amount of independence as part of a federal state. In 1983 the government in Khartoum introduced fundamentalist Islamic law, which only exacerbated the rift between Arabs in the north and the black African tribes in the south. Government forces were strongly influenced by the National Islamic Front (NIF) while the rebels' main supporters were the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In 1989 a group of army officers led by Omar al-Bashir overthrew the Sudanese government and took over the presidency. He was still president in 2012 though he has promised to stand down in 2015. The fighting ended in 2002, but peace was fragile, and in February 2003 rebel groups from African tribes in the Darfur region again took up arms against the government in the struggle for more land and resources. In retaliation the government used various Arab militias including the Janjaweed to disguise the fact that they were really waging an ethnic cleansing campaign against people of African origin. The government itself did nothing to stop the violence. By the summer of 2004, the situation in the Darfur region was chaotic: some estimates put the number of deaths as high as 300 000, between 3 million and 4 million people were homeless, and over 2 million were in urgent need of food and medical attention. To make matters worse, consecutive years of drought and floods had ruined tens of thousands of livelihoods, and living conditions were said to be appalling. The infrastructure was in ruins, with scores of schools and hospitals destroyed, there was no electricity, disease was rife and trade depended on barter. UN and other aid

agencies were desperately trying to provide for basic survival needs; food was dropped in from planes because there were no good roads. The whole of the south was desperately backward and under-developed. Yet the country had plenty of valuable assets which were not being fully exploited: the soil was fertile and watered by the Nile – properly cultivated, it could easily provide sufficient food for the population; and there were rich oil resources.

Hopes for an improvement rose in August 2004 when the African Union began a peacekeeping mission. In January 2005 representatives of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Khartoum government signed a peace deal in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. It was agreed that Southern Sudan would be autonomous for six years, and that there would then be a referendum to decide whether it was to remain part of the Sudan. However, the new deal seemed to have little immediate effect in Darfur, where fighting continued, in spite of all international efforts to bring peace. In March 2009 the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for the arrest of President Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. He continued blithely in office and in April 2010 he won the first multi-party elections to be held in Sudan since 1986. This was no surprise since most of the opposition parties boycotted the elections. The leader of the SPLM, Salva Kiir, was re-elected for another term as president of the semi-independent Darfur.

In January 2011 the referendum over the future of Darfur provided for in the 2005 peace agreement took place; 98 per cent voted in favour of independence. President Bashir accepted the result and said he would not stand for re-election at the end of his term in 2015. In July 2011 South Sudan officially became independent as Africa's 54th state. Even then tensions between the two continued, mainly over possession of oil fields and disputed frontiers. In April 2012 the South took over some disputed oil fields but withdrew after the Sudan launched air attacks. The African Union gave the two sides three months to resolve all their issues, but the future did not look promising.

25.15 AFRICA IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In *Contemporary Africa* (2019) Matthew Graham neatly summarizes the two main narratives that present themselves in considering the future of Africa in the Twenty-First Century.

> What does the future hold for Africa? Is the much heralded "Africa rising" thesis starting to gather apace, as democracy, good governance, and economic growth emerge? Is the Afro-pessimist narrative that depicted a "hopeless" and despairing continent beginning to be rewritten? Or are the green shoots of optimism being undermined by stubborn autocratic rulers, intractable political violence, and economic stagnation? … both narratives have grains of truth, with particular countries manifesting all the characteristics of such contradictory trends. Given that Africa is such a large and diverse continent, it is the site of multiple, coinciding, and conflicting realities: violence and peace; democracy and authoritarianism: growth and regression; domestic power and external weakness.
>
> (Graham, 2019 p.237)

Bill Freund in Contemporary Africa (2016) notes the spectacular population growth in countries such as Ghana, Botswana and Kenya, and cities such as Lagos, Abidjan, Khartoum and Addis Ababa (Freund, p.253). This has prompted burgeoning economic growth, accompanied by the spectacular development of technology. The rapid extension of mobile phone ownership (with more than 420 million unique mobile subscribers in

Africa) has according to a UN report of 2012 impacted poor communities in, 'sectors such as health, education, agriculture, employment, crisis prevention and the environment' (Graham, p.238). The sheer scale of technological change in Kenya, to cite one striking example, has seen it described as the 'silicon savannah' (Graham, p.241). Of course, challenges remain. Technological developments are limited in rural areas where power supply can be frustratingly erratic. As in the west, climate change represents an existential challenge. Global warming in Africa is predicted to increase drought, famine, desertification and rising sea levels. On the other hand, innovative responses include the 'great green wall' from Senegal to Djibouti, major solar power projects in Morocco and wind farms and Hydro-Electric power in Kenya (Graham, 2019 p.246). These innovations also highlight the importance of education in equipping future generations to take on these challenges. If the rich countries in the west can see Africa as a continent to encourage, invest in and support, rather than exploit, then the positive narrative suggested at the start of this section may be given the opportunity to prevail.

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Chapter

26 Latin America

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

The area known as Latin America consists of the countries of South America, Central America including Mexico, and islands in the Caribbean Sea such as Cuba, Jamaica and Hispaniola (see Map 26.1). The latter is divided into two states – Haiti and the Dominican Republic. These states gained their independence from Spain – in the case of Brazil, from Portugal – in the early nineteenth century, and they had much in common. Spanish is spoken in most of these countries, though in Brazil Portuguese is the main language. They all shared similar difficulties: they were underdeveloped both industrially and agriculturally, and they had massive problems of poverty and illiteracy and unstable political systems. Revolutions, coups and assassinations were commonplace, and progress occurred only very slowly and unevenly. The USA provided economic aid for some of the states of Latin America, but its motives were not entirely selfless. In return the Americans expected to be able to exert political influence in order to prevent socialist or communist governments from gaining power. They had no hesitation in intervening in any Latin American country whose government was deemed unacceptable to them.

Consequently, following the end of the Second World War the USA was able to exercise a huge amount of economic, political and military influence, and Latin America found itself dragged into the Cold War. Republican presidents in particular were constantly suspicious that the USSR was trying to forge a Soviet–Latin American Axis, which would give the communists a clear advantage and pose a threat right on the USA's doorstep. US interventions to remove 'suspect' governments took place in Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1962), Brazil (1964), the Dominican Republic (1965), Chile (1970–3), Nicaragua (from 1979 onwards), Panama (1989) and Haiti (1994). However, the attempt to remove Fidel Castro from Cuba in 1962 failed miserably, and in 2012 his brother Raul was still in power.

The international situation changed towards the end of the twentieth century with the ending of the Cold War. The demise of the communist 'enemy' – the Soviet Empire – removed the Americans' justification for their constant interventions. After half a century of US domination, Latin American states had more freedom to take control of their own affairs; no longer could the USA accuse them of aiming to become part of a communist power bloc. Venezuela was the first country to throw off US influence when, in 1998, Hugo Chávez was elected president on a programme of greater spending on social services to help alleviate poverty, and of making trading agreements with Cuba – absolute anathema to the USA! In 2002 right-wing forces backed by US finance tried to overthrow Chávez, but he survived. By this time he had become an inspiration to other Latin American voters: Brazil (2002), Argentina (2003), Chile (2005), Bolivia (2005) and Ecuador (2006) all elected presidents who, if not exactly left-wing, were determined to introduce changes that would give them greater freedom from control by Washington. Chávez was re-elected in

Map 26.1 **Latin America**

2000 and 2006 and again in 2012. These developments had serious consequences for the USA which, for one thing, was losing its economic, diplomatic and military advantages in South America. Some Latin American states began to look towards China as an important trading partner. This seemed bound to affect the US economy adversely. Conversely, some of the Latin American states began to enjoy greater prosperity. By 2011, for example, Brazil was viewed, along with India, as one of the world's great emerging economies, destined soon to rival the USA and China.

26.1 THE ERA OF US DOMINATION

(a) Problems facing the countries of Latin America

- They were economically underdeveloped both industrially and agriculturally. Factory industries did exist (the Second World War had acted as a stimulus because manufactured goods from Europe and the USA were impossible to come by), but for all sorts of reasons, Latin American industry was still well below the level of industry in the developed countries of Europe, the USA and Japan. There was a shortage of capital, equipment and technical knowledge. Home markets were unpredictable because the vast majority of people were too poverty-stricken to provide enough purchasing power, and it was difficult to export because of competition from the advanced industrial nations. Many countries found themselves heavily dependent for exports on a limited range of products, sometimes even a single commodity. A fall in the world price of that commodity would be a major disaster. Chile relied on copper, Cuba on sugar and tobacco, and Bolivia on tin; during the 1950s, in fact, 80 per cent of all Bolivia's revenue came from tin exports. Agriculture remained backward because peasant labour was so plentiful and cheap that wealthy estate owners had no need to go to the trouble of modernizing. Peru, for example, was dominated by huge estates whose owners were all-powerful, and who ruled their peasants like feudal monarchs.
- There was a massive rise in population mainly because of advances in medicine and hygiene and the refusal of the Roman Catholic Church to promote birth control. Peasants found their holdings were too small to support large families, but when they moved to the cities they found that jobs were scarce. Almost all the major cities were surrounded by improvised shanty towns (known as *favelas* in Brazil) that were without water, sewage disposal or electricity. The gap between rich and poor grew wider and little progress was made in eliminating poverty and illiteracy.
- Latin American political systems were, for the most part, inadequate for dealing with such enormous problems. There was no tradition of democracy, except in Chile, and states were dominated by groups of wealthy landowners and run by military dictators (caudillos). After the Second World War democratic systems were introduced in some of the states. But when the newly elected governments tried to introduce reforms, they faced strong opposition from the landowners who were determined to protect their privileged positions. They were able to use the army either to block the reforms or to overthrow the reforming government. This happened in Guatemala (1950), Bolivia (1964), Brazil (1964), Argentina (1966) and Chile (1973).
- Heavy investment by foreigners in industry and agriculture caused problems because much of the profit was taken out of the countries. Most of the oil in Bolivia and Venezuela, both potentially rich countries, was extracted by American-owned companies. The US Fruit Company was the biggest landowner in Guatemala, while Chilean copper mines and Cuban sugar plantations were also under US control.

(b) Solutions to the problems?

- Several international organizations were set up to help: the Organization of American States (OAS), founded in 1948, included most of the Latin American countries and the USA. It aimed to foster inter-American co-operation and to settle disputes. The Central American Common Market (1960) had some success in reducing tariffs.
- The United Nations helped by providing technical experts and holding conferences to discuss how underdeveloped nations might go about increasing exports.

- The USA provided massive economic aid. President Kennedy started the 'Alliance for Progress' which aimed to pump billions of dollars into Latin America to enable economic and social reform to be carried out. However, this kind of aid did not always work out for the best, and sometimes it created extra problems. American motives were mixed: they hoped, by solving basic economic and social problems, to encourage the election of moderate reforming governments which would be popular enough to prevent communists from coming to power. Sometimes the aid was in the form of loans made on condition that a large proportion of the loan should be spent on buying US products. This did nothing to help the development of local industry and involved governments in large interest payments. Often, as with Castro's Cuba and Allende's Chile, aid would be cut short if a government unacceptable to the USA came to power. Only if the government changed would the aid be resumed. In this way the USA was able to exert political influence via economic control; on occasion, they supplied rebels with weapons to overthrow a reforming government (Guatemala, 1954), and even used 20,000 American troops to crush an attempted comeback by a reforming president (the Dominican Republic, 1965).

(c) The crisis of the 1980s

By the early 1980s it was clear that the problems of Latin America had not been solved. Two problems in particular – those of debt and finance – had reached crisis proportions. The trouble was that, under US domination, the countries of Latin America had been obliged to follow economic policies known as 'neo-liberalism'. This involved privatization, deregulation of finance, cuts in social spending and other austerity measures. Basically this was designed to make use of a country's resources in order to benefit a wealthy elite at home, foreign investors, big business and bankers, particularly those in the USA. This had forced Latin American governments to borrow massively from foreign banks, in order to develop their amenities and industries. Many of these banks were in the USA, and the borrowing was at its height from 1973 until 1982. In 1982 the seven largest US banks made 60 per cent of their profits from the interest on loans to Third World countries, as against only 2 per cent in 1970. With the doubling of American interest rates in the period 1979–81, many of the debtor nations could not even pay the interest, let alone repay the debts, and the amount of interest they failed to pay each year was added on to the existing debt. They were forced to borrow from new sources merely to keep up the interest payments on the original loans. If a country stepped out of line, the USA did not hesitate to intervene; for example in 1991 the democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was removed in a military coup backed by the CIA after only eight months in office. Aristide was a committed Roman Catholic, a former priest, who was strongly influenced by the ideals of the Church's liberation theology. This was a style of theology which accepted many of Marx's theories (though not his atheism!). It stressed the church's mission to the poor and oppressed, based on the fact that Jesus was considered as a sympathizer with, and a liberator of the poor and downtrodden. In 2004 Aristide was removed for the second time in a similar coup. Throughout Latin America there were large numbers of priests with left-wing views and some were even supporters of revolution. Inevitably this brought them into conflict with the authorities; many were arrested and some were killed. In 1980 Bishop Oscar Romera of El Salvador was murdered by US-backed paramilitaries.

By 1985 Latin America owed some $368 billion, and there was a constant drain of capital to the USA, leaving Latin America increasingly impoverished. By 1987, as export earnings steadily declined, the situation was approaching catastrophe. *Brazil,* one of the most prosperous states with its huge natural resources, had debts of over $100 million, and in February the government announced that it was suspending interest payments.

Mexico, which owed almost as much, was considering the possibility of repudiating its debts. Fortunately it didn't quite come to that: the IMF and the World Bank, desperate to avoid an economic catastrophe, arranged credits amounting to several billion dollars for Brazil. The Mexican government secured an annual loan for the next 30 years from the IMF and was able to reschedule its debts. Similar arrangements helped other debtor countries to survive.

There is insufficient space to consider all the countries of Latin America, but a closer look at five of them – Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua – will demonstrate the varied Latin American experience during this period of US domination.

26.2 SOUTH AMERICA: BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA

(a) Brazil

Brazil had gained its independence from Portugal in 1825. It was a monarchy until 1889, when it became a republic. Until 1930 the country was ruled mainly by military dictatorships, but none of them succeeded in establishing a stable system. There were economic, social and political problems which caused several revolutions and attempted coups. The country began to make genuine economic progress after 1930 when the army replaced the ultra-conservative government of wealthy landowners with the more progressive and liberal President Getulio Vargas. For the first time the government took over economic planning, and Vargas was especially keen to encourage industry. Thousands of extra jobs were created, especially in electrical and steel manufacture. He soon became popular and was able to stay in power right through the Second World War. However, by this time the army was turning against him. They were worried by his popularity with the working classes and felt that he had become too powerful. In fact, he had been acting as a dictator since 1937, and no elections had taken place. The army wanted a president whom they could control, and so in 1945 Vargas was forced to step down. The army faced a dilemma when he was re-elected in 1950 for a five-year term: should they prevent him from taking office or not? Fortunately the younger army officers favoured Vargas and in the end, he was allowed to return. He stayed in power until 1954. He tried to continue acting as a dictator and once again the army grew tired of him. They accused him of corruption and incompetence and asked him to resign. Instead, he committed suicide, claiming that his death was 'a sacrifice on behalf of the Brazilian workers'.

The election of 1955 was won by Juscelino Kubitschek, whose first major action was to increase the army's pay, thereby, he hoped, guaranteeing their support. He completed his term in office in 1961, but his presidency was a disappointment. His only memorable achievement was the building of a new capital, Brasilia, and that was arguably an extravagance the country could ill afford. The winner in the 1961 presidential election was Janio Quadros, but he resigned after only seven months and the vice-president, Julio Goulart, took over. He wanted to move Brazil gradually towards democracy and proposed to give more people the right to vote. He also planned to limit the amount of profit that large multinational companies could take out of the country; the government could then use the extra revenue to help improve social conditions for the masses. Worse still – as far as the USA was concerned – he opened diplomatic relations with the USSR, promised to nationalize Brazil's oil refineries, and opposed economic sanctions against Cuba.

All this was much too radical for the army and for the right, and tension between them and Goulart's supporters looked like developing into civil war. US president Lyndon Johnson told the American ambassador in Brazil that the USA must do everything possible to help overthrow 'this left-wing government'. Goulart was accused of being a communist, though by no stretch of the imagination could this be taken seriously; in fact

he was a millionaire landowner and a devout Roman Catholic. However, in April 1964 he was removed in a military coup. Fortunately there was no civil war, but it emerged later that President Johnson had ordered US naval vessels, including an aircraft carrier and two destroyers, together with ammunition and fuel, to be made ready in case the Brazilian military needed assistance. Although well-intentioned, Goulart's policies left the country in economic difficulties. He had failed to attract sufficient foreign investment which had been discouraged by the USA; inflation increased rapidly, and economic growth was minimal.

For the next 20 years, Brazil was ruled by the military. For the first few years their policy was one of harsh repression: the old political parties were banned, there was a strict press censorship, opponents were arrested and the jails soon filled with political prisoners; trade unionists and left-wing students were a favourite target and there were reports of widespread torture and violent treatment of prisoners. After 1974, when General Ernesto Geisel became president, repression was gradually relaxed and it was announced that the army would return the country to full democracy, albeit slowly. During the years of military dictatorship the government had great success with its economic policies, achieving what many described as an 'economic miracle'. Faced with massive inflation and a stagnating economy, they tackled the problems by borrowing extensively from abroad. Countries that had been unwilling to lend to the Goulart government were quite happy to do business with a strong right-wing regime which had eliminated communist influence. This stimulated economic growth so that the years 1968–74 were a boom period; the annual growth rate was 10 per cent and exports quadrupled. After 1974 the growth rate fell to around 5 per cent, mainly because Brazil was having to import more of its oil supplies, much of it from Iraq. By 1980 it seemed that the good times were over: Brazil had incurred huge foreign debts, there was a slump in export markets, there was a yawning gap between rich and poor and there was widespread unrest among the rural poor in the north east of the country. In an attempt to find substitute fuels, the government, which had its own supplies of uranium, turned to nuclear power and bought reactors from West Germany. But there was no immediate improvement and in provincial elections in 1982, the government suffered significant defeats.

Faced with escalating economic and social problems, the military decided this was an appropriate time to hand power over to civilians. In 1985 the presidential electoral college chose the 75-year-old Tancredo Neves as the first civilian president for over 20 years. Sadly, he was taken ill almost immediately and died before he could be sworn in. His deputy, Jose Sarney, took over and for the next four years struggled to stabilize the economy. In February 1987 the government announced that it was suspending interest payments, but the IMF came to the rescue with credits amounting to $41 million. Brazil was able to pay the interest on time, but Sarney's emergency policies caused hyper-inflation, and in the 1989 election he was defeated by Ferdinando Collor. In an attempt to stem the rocketing inflation he introduced even more stringent policies: the currency was devalued, government expenditure was reduced, bank accounts of over 50 000 cruzeiros (about £1300 US at that time) were frozen for 18 months. This was a disastrous move since it meant that the economy was deprived of some $80 billion at a time when it was most needed. The result was a wave of business failures and massive unemployment. In the midst of the chaos Collor was accused of corruption, impeached by the Senate and forced to resign at the end of 1992.

The 1994 election was won by a coalition of right-wing groups with Francesco Cardoso as president. He had produced a *Plano Real* designed to bring inflation under control. This involved large tax increases, wage reductions for public-service workers, and the privatization of many government enterprises. This had great success in lowering inflation from a thousand per cent when the plan was first put into action, to single

figures by 1997. Overseas markets began to revive and there were marked increases in exports of agricultural produce and manufactured goods. Cardoso was re-elected president in 1998. Just as it seemed that Brazil had at last achieved some sort of stability, there was another crisis. Some of its foreign customers, including Russia and south-east Asia, reduced their imports from Brazil, government spending and borrowing were still much too high, and inflation began to rise again. Once more the IMF stepped in to help stabilize the currency with massive credits of $41 billion. There was considerable unrest among the working classes, many of whom were poverty-stricken, and there was an increase in crime and violence.

The year 2002 was when things began to change, with the election of the left-wing Luis Ignacio da Silva (popularly known as 'Lula') as president. He was re-elected in 2006 and remained in power until the end of 2010. It was during this period that Brazil at last began to fulfil its promise, so that by 2011 it was viewed as potentially one of the world's leading economies (see below).

(b) Venezuela

Venezuela is one of the wealthiest states of Latin America because of its oil resources. Until 1945, however, profits went to foreign oil companies (mainly American and British) or to the small group of wealthy people who ran the country via a military dictatorship. The great mass of the population received no benefit from this wealth and remained poor and illiterate. In 1945 Romulo Betancourt, the leader of a progressive left-wing party called *Acción Democrática,* was placed in power by a group of young army officers after fierce fighting in Caracas, the capital, had led to the overthrow of the military government. Betancourt introduced a new constitution which allowed full civil rights to all citizens. A programme of land reform was introduced, heavy taxes were placed on the foreign oil companies, and plans were prepared to exclude the army from politics. These reforms were bitterly opposed by foreign companies and by rich landowners, and in 1948 Betancourt was driven out of office by an army coup.

For the next ten years, the country was under ruthless military dictatorship. Political parties and trade unions were banned, and a strict press censorship was imposed. On the other hand, with the removal of Betancourt the USA was once again prepared to invest in Venezuela. American dollars flowed in and some progress was made with the building of steel plants to exploit local iron-ore deposits. Iron and steel soon became Venezuela's most valuable export, but still very little of the country's wealth filtered down to the ordinary people. In 1957 Archbishop Blanco of Caracas publicly condemned the great wealth and corruption that was rife among the country's leaders, while the majority of Venezuelans lived in poverty and often subhuman conditions. In 1958 a general strike broke out and a section of the army removed the dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1952–8). Democracy was restored and Betancourt was voted back into power.

Betancourt immediately raised Venezuela's share of oil revenues to 60 per cent, but this disappointed the growing communist party which had expected him to nationalize all foreign companies. However, he proceeded cautiously, not wanting to alienate the USA in case aid was stopped. Although measures were introduced to improve education and health, his popularity gradually waned, though he was able to complete his presidency, stepping down in 1964. Democracy survived, with the presidency alternating between *Acción Democrática* and the other main group, the Christian Social Party. Venezuela was now the main supplier of oil for the Central American states and to a lesser extent for the USA, and was doing well out of the great oil boom of the early 1970s. In 1976 President Carlos Andrés Pérez nationalized part of the oil industry and created a new state oil company known as PdVSA.

The country remained politically stable right through until the early 1980s; the government legalized the Communist Party and opened diplomatic relations with the USSR. But then there was a fall in world oil prices that adversely affected Venezuela's revenue. At the same time there were difficulties in maintaining the levels of its other main exports – iron and steel. In March 1985, President Lusinchi (*Acción Democrática),* who had been elected in 1983, complained about the 'obstinately protective policies' of industrialized nations, which 'obstruct our trade possibilities'. He was especially critical of the USA which had just announced that it would reduce imports of Venezuelan steel from 550 000 tonnes a year (about 85 per cent of its total steel exports) to 110 000 tonnes for the next five years – a disastrous blow for Venezuelan industry. By the early 1990s the country was falling into arrears with debt repayments, and the government was trying to cope by following IMF requirements: this involved reducing imports and government spending. At the same time unemployment was rising and inflation was running at not far short of 40 per cent. Throughout the period there had been very little improvement in social conditions; the early advances in education and health care had not been maintained and dire poverty was rife. There was growing discontent and riots and in 1992 Colonel Hugo Chávez, a young military officer, was so disgusted when the government sent troops into poor neighbourhoods to put down the protests that he organized a coup to overthrow the dictatorship. Although the coup failed, it brought Chávez to the public's attention and demonstrated the split in the ranks of the military.

Meanwhile the economic situation worsened and in 1994 half the country's banking system collapsed. In 1997 the government announced an expansion of gold and diamond mining in an attempt to reduce its reliance on oil. After another failed coup in 1994, Chávez decided to run for president in the 1998 election. Campaigning on a programme of increased social spending and trading agreements with Cuba, he won a convincing victory, as voters turned away from the two main parties.

26.3 MEXICO, GUATEMALA AND NICARAGUA

(a) Mexico

The Mexicans won their independence from Spain in 1821 and until 1877 they were ruled by an assortment of two emperors, several dictators and some presidents. Important events included the loss of Texas after a short war of independence in 1836. Large numbers of Americans had settled in the thinly populated northern area of Mexico, known as *Tejas.* Calling themselves Texans, they declared themselves an independent republic and defeated a Mexican army sent to suppress them. Texas became a state of the USA in 1845. Mexico was defeated again in a war with the USA (1846–8), which resulted in the loss of about one-third of Mexican territory, including the areas now known as California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Arizona, together with parts of Wyoming and Colorado. However, the USA did pay Mexico $18 million and waived its debts.

From 1876 until 1910 the country was ruled, except for one short interlude, by a dictator, Porfirio Díaz. This was a period of relative stability: oil production, mining and manufacturing industries were developed, largely thanks to foreign investment, while education, health care and the country's infrastructure were improved. The problem was that most of the industry was owned by foreigners, and little of the wealth generated percolated down to the masses. When workers formed trade unions in an attempt to improve their conditions, they were quickly suppressed. Also Mexico had become uncomfortably dependent on the USA. In 1910 Díaz decided to stand for re-election, although he was 80 years old by that time. He was declared the winner by a huge majority, but the election was so blatantly fraudulent that a revolution broke out, forcing him to resign.

The following decade was extremely confused and the revolution became a civil war as revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries fought to gain control. In 1916–17 the USA sent troops into northern Mexico against the revolutionaries, and a war between Mexico and the USA was only narrowly averted. After 1920 the party eventually known as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) gradually gained control. It was dominated by revolutionary and reformist politicians and its programme was based on economic reform designed to narrow the gap between rich and poor. The PRI remained in power until 2000. In 1938 President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) nationalized the oil industry, much to the delight of the general public. However, this was not welcomed by the USA or the UK, both of which started a boycott of Mexican goods. This forced Mexico to sell oil to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, but after a compensation agreement was reached in November 1941, the USA was prepared to buy Mexican oil again. In fact after the USA entered the Second World War in December 1941, Mexican oil became vital. Following the sinking of some of their oil tankers by German submarines, the Mexicans joined the Allied side in 1942. An air-force squadron known as 'the Aztec Eagles' worked alongside the American Fifth Air Force in the liberation of the Philippines in 1945.

For 25 years following the end of the war, Mexico enjoyed a period of economic progress. The government invested in agriculture, fuel production, the railway system and primary education. A modest, but consistent annual growth rate averaging 3–4 per cent was achieved; Mexico became a major producer of petroleum – the sixth largest in the world; and exports of cotton, coffee and sugar were also important sources of revenue. By 1960 the number of workers employed in manufacturing industries had overtaken those working in agriculture. However, in the late 1960s the economy began to show signs of strain, partly because the government had accumulated massive external debts thanks to its extravagant borrowing. Confident that oil revenues would always be sufficient to cover interest payments, successive governments seemed to have abandoned restraint.

There was wide protest, and on 2 October 1968 troops fired on a demonstration by an estimated 10 000 students in Mexico City demanding a revolution and a return to democracy. Estimates of the numbers killed vary between 30 and 300. The government claimed that snipers among the demonstrators had fired at the army first. It later emerged that the snipers were actually members of the presidential guard who had been ordered to fire on the army in order to provoke them to attack the students. Coming as it did ten days before the Olympic Games were about to open in Mexico City, this caused grave concern about security; in response the USA sent riot control experts, weapons and ammunition to Mexico in case of further violence.

As the 1970s progressed Mexico's exports were badly hit by the world recession, leading to a shortage of capital for investment, to inflation and to difficulties in meeting interest repayments. Unemployment was rising and the gap between rich and poor continued to widen, until by 1980 it was estimated that about nine-tenths of Mexico's total wealth was owned by fewer than half a million people out of a total population of 85 million. In 1982 the government introduced desperate measures: the banks were nationalized, the currency was devalued by 70 per cent and there were drastic reductions in spending on public services. The new president, Miguel de la Madrid, elected in 1982, negotiated a deal with the IMF for a loan and a rescheduling of half the country's overseas debts of $96 billion. However, Mexico failed to fulfil the conditions attached, and in 1895 the IMF was preparing to cancel the agreement when Mexico City suffered a severe earthquake (measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale) which caused widespread damage and killed at least 7000 people. Clearly this was not the time to cause Mexico any further misery, and so the agreement went ahead. Meanwhile the PRI government was fast losing popularity and it came under further criticism for what was seen as its incompetent handling of the earthquake relief efforts. For the first time since the 1930s, the party began to face challengers at elections.

Worse was to follow: in 1986 there was a sudden collapse in world oil prices and a consequent reduction in Mexico's oil revenues. There seemed a real possibility that Mexico would have to repudiate its debts. As President de la Madrid put it: 'We have reached the limit of being able to sustain this net transfer of resources to the rest of the world, which violates economic logic and is tremendously inequitable.' The more pessimistic economists were predicting the collapse of world-trading financial systems if Third World countries were to begin a mass repudiation of debts. In 1990 Mexico again had to appeal to the IMF, which saved the situation by promising relief of $3.6 billion dollars for the next 30 years, while the World Bank rescheduled its debts. The next president, Carlos Salinas, (1988–94) reduced domestic spending and embarked on a policy of privatization; although this did nothing to solve the unemployment problem, it did help to bring inflation down to single figures and eliminated the budget deficit. Mexico joined the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), along with the USA and Canada, which came into force in January 1994. This removed tariffs on more than half of Mexico's exports to the USA and on about one-third of US exports to Mexico. All tariffs between the two countries were to be removed after 15 years. Opinions differ on whether or not this has been beneficial for Mexico. Certainly Mexican exports to the USA increased, and the country was opened up to US and Canadian investment. On the other hand, Mexican farmers suffered because imports of US agricultural produce, especially meat, increased substantially.

The year 1994 saw two shocking events which did nothing to enhance the reputation of the PRI government. First, on 1 January, there was an armed uprising in the southern province of Chiapas by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (ZANL). Chiapas was one of the most deprived parts of Mexico; the majority of the population were poverty-stricken Mayan Indians who had no land of their own and were angered by the blatant corruption and incompetence of the ruling elite. Demanding land reform, full civil rights and genuine democracy, the Zapatistas (as they called themselves, after Emiliano Zapata, one of the leaders of the 1910 revolution) occupied several towns, setting fire to police stations and army barracks. Within a few days they were crushed by the Mexican army, suffering heavy casualties. Having decided to abandon violence, they concentrated on an internet campaign that brought them widespread publicity and growing support. Then in March 1994 the PRI candidate in the coming presidential election, Luis Donaldo Colosio, was shot dead at a political rally in Tijuana. Mario Aburto, a factory worker, was jailed for the murder, but many still believe that he was a scapegoat, and that the murder was arranged by the PRI itself. It was alleged that with his promise of drastic reforms of the corrupt political system, Colosio was breaking party ranks and therefore had to be eliminated.

Both these events frightened off investors at a time when outgoing President Salinas had just indulged in a year of high spending resulting in a huge budget deficit and inflation. This was made worse when members of his family helped themselves to enormous illicit payoffs. With falling oil prices compounding the problem, Mexico was heading for an economic crisis. The new president, Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000), decided to devalue the peso. Within the space of one week in December 1994 the peso fell from 4 to the dollar to 7.2. With many private banks apparently on the verge of collapse, and some US banks involved in Mexico also threatened, Zedillo appealed to the IMF and the USA. US president Clinton, working with the IMF, arranged loans of around $50 billion. Economic collapse was averted and over the next six years there was a modest recovery. But the crisis had important results. In the words of Peter Calvocoressi:

> The Mexican crisis called into question the ability of international finance to meet such a crisis and therewith the willingness of financiers worldwide to support Latin American governments pursuing economic policies dependent on foreign loans and investment. The collapse of the Mexican peso dismayed all Latin American countries, where economic growth was desperately needed for its own economic ends

and as a prerequisite for political stability. In Mexico the gap between rich and poor widened, and insurrection became more widespread and better armed.

In fact by 2000, underneath the outward appearance of prosperity, about one-third of Mexico's population still lived below the poverty line. The PRI seemed to be in a state of stagnation and blocked all moves designed to lessen the gap between rich and poor. In the Congressional elections of 1997 the party lost control of Congress, gaining only 38 per cent of the vote. In the presidential election of 2000 the PRI candidate, Francisco Labastida, was opposed by Vicente Fox, representing the centre-right National Action Party (PAN). Fox won a comfortable victory with 43 per cent of the vote against Labastida's 36 per cent; single-party rule by the PRI had been brought to an end after 71 years.

(b) Guatemala

Situated on Mexico's southern border, Guatemala is one of the poorest states of Latin America. Its history during the twentieth century is an excellent illustration of US involvement. A Spanish colony since the mid-sixteenth century, Guatemala gained independence from Spain in 1821, and for a short time it was part of a Mexican empire and then part of a new federal state known as the United Provinces of Central America. This broke up in 1840 when Guatemala became fully independent. Largely an agricultural state, its economy depended on exports of bananas and coffee. The population, of which about 40 per cent were Mayan Indians who did not speak Spanish, consisted mainly of landless peasants, and the country was dominated by a few wealthy landowners and the army. In the early twentieth century the USA became heavily involved in Guatemala in the form of the powerful United Fruit Company (UFC). Beginning in 1901 the UFC gradually increased its activities and investments in Guatemala until by the Second World War it controlled almost half the country's best agricultural land and was the majority share-owner in the railways and the electricity system, among other things. This meant that although this foreign involvement brought many positive developments, in the last resort the interests of the UFC came first. The classic example of this was that the UFC was reluctant to finance the building of new roads because this would reduce its profits from the railways.

In October 1944 dissatisfaction with this state of affairs reached a climax: during a general strike the long-serving military dictator, Jorge Ubico (1931–44), was forced to step down by a mixed uprising of anti-government army officers, students and liberal intellectuals. In 1945 democratic elections were held and the Christian Socialist, Juan José Arévalo, was elected president for five years. Much-needed reforms were introduced:

- Many foreign-owned estates were confiscated and the land redistributed to peasants.
- A minimum wage was introduced.
- Extensive building programmes were started, including new houses, hospitals and schools.
- Landowners were required to provide adequate housing for their farm labourers.
- The formation of political parties was allowed, and so was the formation of trade unions, although their powers were restricted.

The next president, Jacobo Arbenz, was elected in a landslide victory in 1951. He continued Arévalo's reforms, going much further. There were new social welfare programmes and wage increases for workers. Uncultivated land was taken from large estates, including those of the UFC, to be redistributed among peasants; although compensation was offered, the UFC claimed that it was not enough. Then Arbenz took one step too far: he legalized the Communist Party. This was too much for the USA: all aid to Guatemala was

immediately stopped, Arbenz was accused of being a communist, and his opponents were supplied with arms and trained in neighbouring Honduras and Nicaragua by American CIA agents. Early in1954 the USA introduced a resolution in the Organization of American States (OAS) declaring that communist domination of any state in the Western hemisphere posed a threat to the security of all member states. This was passed by 17 votes to one (Guatemala).

In June 1954 American-backed forces led by Colonel Castillo Armas invaded Guatemala from Honduras and Nicaragua, while American planes bombed Guatemala City. Although the official Guatemalan army took no part in the coup, neither did they attempt to defend Arbenz, who was forced to resign. Armas took over and became a military dictator; parliament was disbanded and leading communists were arrested. Armas was assassinated in 1957 and was replaced by another military dictator, Miguel Ydigoras. US aid was resumed and an uprising against Ydigoras was put down in 1960 with American help.

The Americans insisted on calling the overthrow of President Arbenz an 'anti-communist coup'. But there seems little doubt that the Eisenhower government overestimated the threat from communism in Guatemala. It was prepared to sacrifice the Arbenz reforming government even though it meant violating the principle of non-intervention and souring relations with the rest of Latin America. Anti-American feeling spread, and 'Yankee go home' became a common slogan throughout Latin America.

Years of military dictatorship followed the overthrow of President Arbenz, during which the opposition constantly demanded social and economic reform. For over 30 years the country was in a state of virtual civil war: left-wing groups resorted to guerrilla attacks and kidnappings and were opposed by right-wing vigilante groups; the government used death squads against people deemed to be communists. It was calculated that in four months (October 1979–January 1980) during the presidency of General Romero García, 3252 political murders had taken place. After the next election, said to have been won by a García nominee, General Guevara, a group of army officers declared that the result had been fixed, and in March 1982 they put General Ríos Montt in power. After little more than a year, in August 1983, another coup replaced Ríos Montt with yet another General, Óscar Mejía. Montt complained that the USA had put pressure on him to take action against Nicaragua, and that when he refused, they had engineered his removal in favour of somebody who would. Soon afterwards Mejíia did indeed announce that he saw the Sandinista government of Nicaragua as a threat to the whole of Central America (see below). He promised a return to civilian democracy and in 1985 elections were held for a legislative assembly. The Christian Democrats emerged as clear winners with 51 out of the 100 seats, and in December their leader, Cerezo Arévalo, was elected president for five years.

Arévalo managed to tread a narrow tightrope, trying to reconcile the guerrillas and vigilantes, while the army was a baleful background presence. To complicate matters further, the economy was in crisis, the treasury was empty, and his fear was that if his reforming policies went too far, he would be removed by US intervention. Arévalo completed his full term and was replaced in 1991 by Jorge Serrano. He had some success in reversing the economic downturn and decreasing inflation, but then in May 1993 he made the mistake of suspending the constitution and dissolving Congress and the Supreme Court. He claimed that this was part of a clampdown to reduce the amount of corruption in public life; he also tried to remove civil liberties and muzzle the press. This caused an outcry from most sections of society, and the army forced him to resign. Congress reconvened and in June 1993 chose Ramiro de León, a popular civil rights leader, to complete the presidential term.

De León was keen to bring formal ending to the civil-war situation that had now dragged on for well over 30 years. The Roman Catholic Church helped the government and Congress to agree on a programme of constitutional reform which came into operation

in August 1994. De León worked hard to bring about reconciliation and the United Nations became involved in the search for peace. But it was not until 1996 that the civil war was officially ended. President Álvaro Arzú of the National Advancement Party (PAN), who was elected in January 1996, had the distinction of signing a peace agreement with the main guerrilla group, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). In February he had personal meetings in Mexico with the rebel leaders and a ceasefire from 20 March was agreed. In December 1996 a formal peace agreement was signed; this legalized the URNG and granted a partial amnesty to the various participants in the violence. The war was over at last, but not before some 200 000 people had been killed during those 36 years, well over half of whom were Mayan Indians, who were especially targeted because of their militancy. Although the fighting was officially over, there was inevitably a legacy of bitterness and mistrust. The congressional and presidential elections of November and December 1999 were won by the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), and the new president, Alfonso Portillo, faced daunting problems including a high crime rate, continued violence and corruption, and economic challenges.

(c) Nicaragua

Like Guatemala, Nicaragua was a Spanish colony from the mid-sixteenth century until it became independent in 1821; then it was part of the Mexican empire for a short time and after that it became a member of the United Provinces of Central America until 1840, when it achieved full independence. The country had a disturbed history: politically unstable, punctuated by periods of ruthless military dictatorship and plagued by foreign intervention, especially from the USA. For the remainder of the nineteenth century internal politics were dominated by the power struggle between liberals, whose main power base was in León, and the conservatives, based in Granada. The two parties alternated in power – liberals for a short period in the 1850s, conservatives from 1860 until 1993, and liberals from 1993 until 1909.

The president during this last period was José Santos Zelaya, who was responsible for some important changes. There were great improvements in education, transport (new railways were built) and communications; coffee production expanded and exports increased, and the country enjoyed a modest prosperity. He also began the building of a new and neutral capital city – Managua. This helped to reduce the long rivalry and feuding between León and Granada and between liberals and conservatives. Unfortunately Zelaya had several faults: he was violent and corrupt, and developed delusions of further grandeur. He had many of his conservative opponents arrested, tortured and executed, and he and his associates helped themselves shamelessly to the state's assets – selling privileges and concessions to foreign interests and increasing taxes, but keeping the extra revenue for themselves. And finally he had visions of a united states of Central America, with himself as president! To further this ambition he stirred up unrest in other states. In 1906 for example, his troops invaded Guatemala in an attempt to overthrow the government. When this failed he turned to Honduras and supported a rebellion there; when that failed, his troops invaded Honduras, and with help from the army of El Salvador, defeated the Hondurans and occupied the capital, Tegucigalpa. By 1909 most Nicaraguans had had enough of Zelaya; the conservatives had hated him for years, and even his own liberal supporters had turned against him, disgusted at the corruption and the meddling in the internal affairs of other states. The USA saw him as a destabilizing influence in the region and felt that their own interests were threatened.

It was a liberal, General Juan Estrada, who decided the time had come to remove Zelaya. He organized an uprising and was supported by the USA which sent warships and marines in case the coup failed. Zelaya decided to beat a hasty retreat to Mexico, having

thoughtfully emptied the treasury before leaving. However, the power struggle between liberals and conservatives broke out again, and in 1912 US marines were sent in to prop up the conservative government and restore order. They stayed until 1925, but as soon as they left violence broke out again and after only a few months US forces returned. In 1927 the Somoza family came to power with the approval of the USA and the situation gradually stabilized, partly because American troops stayed until 1933.

After that the Somoza family ruled Nicaragua with an iron fist until 1979, supported by the USA. Political opponents were exiled and each of the Somozas amassed a large fortune. On three occasions the USA was able to use Nicaraguan territory and troops for attacks on other Latin American governments that it didn't approve of – Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961) and the Dominican Republic (1965). The last of the Somazas, Anastasio, was so blatantly corrupt that he even became an embarrassment to the USA. President Carter urged him to reform and pay more attention to human rights. This had little effect and in 1979 he was driven out by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, named after Augusto Sandinista, who had led an unsuccessful revolution in 1933 and was later murdered on the orders of Somoza. The Sandinistas had widespread support among ordinary people and from a section of the Roman Catholic Church which was highly critical of the excesses of capitalism.

The new Sandinista government immediately introduced a programme of long overdue reform: a redistribution of 5 million acres of land, including some confiscated Somoza property, to about 100,000 families, a literacy drive and health improvements which eliminated polio and reduced other diseases. There were other social and economic reforms, and in 1985 Oxfam reported that the efforts of the government and their commitment to improving the conditions of their people were exceptional. Although the Sandinistas allowed a mixed economy of state and privately owned business, the US Reagan administration which took office in 1981 saw them as dangerous communists, especially when they formed close links with Cuba. The USA did everything it could to undermine them and bring them down. All aid was stopped; the US began, and encouraged other states to join, a trade blockade and a credit squeeze against Nicaragua; and they financed the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), known as the Contras. The Contras waged a damaging guerrilla campaign, blowing up bridges, schools and health clinics and burning crops. After they had mined three harbours, the International Court of Justice condemned the American CIA's backing of the Contras and ordered them to pay compensation for damages caused; the USA rejected the ruling and refused to pay compensation.

US policy was not popular with most of Nicaragua's neighbours. A meeting of the Latin American parliament (which had been founded in 1968) was held in Guatemala City in April 1986, when sixteen out of eighteen members voted in favour of a motion condemning the US attitude (Honduras and El Salvador were the exceptions). The policy was controversial in the USA itself, and in March 1987, following the Irangate Scandal, Congress voted that aid to the Contras should be stopped.

This provided a ray of hope for embattled Nicaragua and her president, Daniel Ortega, who had been elected in 1984 for six years. In 1987 President Óscar Arias of Costa Rica persuaded all the Central American presidents to support his peace plan for the region, an achievement that won him the Nobel Peace Prize. However, the plan proved difficult to carry out, mainly because the Reagan administration was still doing its utmost to destabilize Nicaragua. Under US pressure, both Honduras and El Salvador declined to co-operate with the peace plan. Ortega's co-operation with Castro's Cuba outraged the Americans, and during the 1990 election campaign, the Bush administration threatened that violence would continue if the Sandinistas won the election. Even so, it was a surprise when the National Opposition Union candidate, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, became the first female president to be elected in Latin America. Ortega and the Sandinistas accepted the result and she was able to serve her six-year term. Her main achievement was to disarm

some of the guerrilla groups that had been terrorising the country for years, and most of the fighting ceased. Things became more stable and some of the Sandinista social reforms were allowed to stay. But the economy was in total ruins and government debts were astronomical. Nevertheless, Ortega was again defeated in the 1996 election, this time by Arnoldo Alemán, and in the 2001 election by the National Liberal Party candidate (PLC), Enrique Bolanos.

At the turn of the century the country was still in dire straits. In 1998 there was a devastating hurricane which killed 9000 people, left around 2 million homeless and caused damage amounting to $10 billion. In 2002 former president Alemán was charged with corruption and embezzlement and later sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. The situation was so bad that in 2004 the World Bank and the IMFI waived $4.5 billion of Nicaragua's debts. In the elections of November 2006 Daniel Ortega made a comeback: he won the presidency with 62 per cent of the vote, and the Sandinistas had a comfortable majority in parliament. But as they took office in January 2007, they faced a challenging prospect – Nicaragua had the distinction of being the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. When he stood for election for a third term in November 2011, Ortega won a landslide victory.

26.4 THE CHALLENGE TO US DOMINATION

Towards the end of the twentieth century, some Latin American states began to resist US control. As genuine democracy spread, leftish political groups organized campaigns in favour of social and economic reform. People were prepared to vote for them because their programmes were attractive: the neo-liberal-style policies favoured by the USA should be abandoned; foreign companies should be required to hand over more of their profits to the state to help tackle the poverty and inequality which were still rife throughout Latin America. Since the Cold War was over and the USSR had ceased to exist, the USA could no longer get rid of left-leaning governments on the grounds that they were aiming to form alliances with the communist bloc. The first major challenge to US influence came in 1998 when Hugo Chávez won the **Venezuelan** presidential election with 56 per cent of the vote on a programme of increased social spending and an attack on poverty.

Similar trends followed in some other important states: in 2002 the left-wing Luiz Inácio da Silva (popularly known as 'Lula') won the **Brazilian** presidential election with a programme similar to that of Hugo Chávez. The following year **Argentina** followed suit with the election of Nestor Kirschner, and in **Chile** in January 2005 the centre-left Michele Bachelet was elected – Chile's first woman president. Like-minded presidents were elected in **Bolivia** and **Ecuador** in 2006, and in the same year Daniel Ortega staged a comeback when he became president of **Nicaragua** for the second time after a gap of 16 years. Meanwhile in **Mexico** the trend seemed to be in the opposite direction: after 71 years of rule by nominally left-wing governments, voters turned to a moderately conservative party for their next president – Vicente Fox. A brief look at each of these countries should reveal how much, or how little progress has been made towards modernization.

(a) Venezuela

Although Venezuela was rich in oil, when Hugo Chávez became president in 1998 the country was facing economic problems, mainly because of a fall in world oil prices. His general aim was to free Venezuela from US influence and create a network of countries sympathetic to his project. He didn't try to abandon capitalism, but simply moved away from the type of neo-liberal capitalism favoured by the USA and other leaders, such

as Margaret Thatcher in the UK. From the beginning he spoke out publicly against the USA, ending Venezuela's long-standing military ties with the USA, and giving economic support to Cuba. This provided a lifeline for the beleaguered Cuba, which had lost its main supporter when the USSR collapsed.

One of Chávez's earliest moves was to tighten control over the PdVSA, the state oil company set up in the 1970s. In recent years the company had been contributing less and less to the state treasury, while managers paid themselves vastly inflated salaries. This was immediately put right, and a Hydrocarbons Law introduced, making it illegal for any private company to own more than 50 per cent of the shares in joint oil ventures with the state. All of this upset many traditional interests – sections of the army, oil executives and right-wingers in general. An alliance of these groups, partly financed by the USA, staged street demonstrations demanding the resignation of Chávez. A group of hostile officers kidnapped him, but he was rescued by officers loyal to him, and amid massive pro-Chávez street demonstrations, he was enabled to stay in power. This proved to be the first serious blow against US influence in South America and the beginning of a new era. Large parts of the economy were taken into state control: the oil industry was fully nationalized in 2007, followed by the electricity supply and telecommunications. In 2011 the gold industry followed.

By this time Chávez had started moving much of Venezuela's gold reserves out of Western banks and into countries he counts as allies – Russia, China and Brazil. As the debt crisis in Europe worsened, more reserves were transferred to China, a move welcomed by Beijing, which had invested heavily in Venezuela. The main economic weakness was that Venezuela, the world's fifth largest oil exporter, was still overdependent on oil production, with around 90 per cent of revenue from all exports coming from oil. It meant that whenever world oil prices fell, the economy suffered. In 2009 for example, the economy shrank by around 3 per cent because of the world recession.

Another aim of the Chávez government was to help the poverty-stricken masses by spreading some of the country's wealth more widely. According to UN statistics, in 1998 when Chávez came to power, 54 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line. He introduced a social welfare programme known as the Bolivar Plan 2000 (called after the nineteenth-century revolutionary leader and founding father of Venezuela). There were plans to improve the public healthcare system, housing projects and loans to enable people to start up small businesses. Thousands of co-operatives owned by the workers were set up with government help. Extra cash was made available to tackle the AIDS epidemic. Great progress was made in securing equal rights for women, including a new rule for political parties: at least 50 per cent of election candidates had to be female. In 2008 the government announced a $111 million plan to upgrade dozens of hospitals.

There is no doubt that Chávez and his Bolivarian socialism have brought important changes to Venezuela. He has switched the country from being almost a colony of the USA, asserting its independence, and has focused on trade and co-operation agreements with other states in the region, in order to promote his vision of Latin American integration. His attempts to reduce poverty have had some success: UN statistics show that 54 per cent of the population lived in poverty in 1998 compared to 28 per cent in 2008. Clearly there is still some way to go, but these statistics suggest that if similar policies were to be continued for another ten years (until 2018), serious poverty might well have been all but eliminated. However, by 2012 the signs were not auspicious. By this time Chávez had alienated most of the business class, the Roman Catholic Church, and left-wingers who felt that he had become too authoritarian. In 2009 the Church and Human Rights Watch accused him of 'creating a climate of fear'. Chávez was due to stand for re-election in October 2012, but local elections in 2010 and 2011 showed a fall in his socialist party vote. He also had health problems, having been recently diagnosed with cancer. However, he

was still seen as a hero by the majority of the working class; in spite of all these problems, plus the efforts of the USA to discredit him, he won the 2012 election comfortably.

(b) Brazil

In 2002 the voters of Brazil, sick of corrupt party politics and neo-liberal economic policies, elected as president 'Lula' da Silva of the Workers' Party. He had promised to narrow the enormous gap between rich and poor by expanding education and redistributing land, and to introduce social welfare programmes. In office he turned out to be much more moderate than he had sounded during the election campaign. Though a socialist, he felt that the economic crisis was serious enough to require non-socialist solutions. He went along with the IMF conditions, reducing public spending in return for the $41 billion credit needed to stabilize the currency. On the other hand he did introduce widespread anti-poverty programmes, and increased the minimum wage by 25 per cent. His *Bolsa Familia* programme paid modest monthly grants to poor families provided they sent their children to school and had their health checked regularly. It was estimated that by 2008 *Bolsa Familia* had helped some 7.5 million families.

Lula was not afraid to stand up to the USA if he felt strongly enough. He opposed George Bush's Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and got away with it, probably because the USA was preoccupied with the Iraq War. Instead, a trade agreement with China did much to steady the economy, and reforms were made to pensions and taxation systems, as well as a drive for administrative efficiency. New policies were devised to encourage industry, trade and exports and foreign investors were encouraged. Inflation and government debt were brought under control. This was a considerable achievement and Lula was re-elected in 2006. Brazil received an enormous boost in 2007 when the Tupi undersea oilfield was discovered, taking it into the top league of oil producers and removing the need to import oil. The surge in exports, the fall in unemployment and the general economic expansion, together with the welfare programmes, have helped to lift millions of people out of poverty, so that for the first time probably a majority of the population of over 190 million can be deemed middle-class.

The constitution did not allow Lula da Silva to stand for a third term in office, but the Workers' Party continued in power with the election of Dilma Rousseff who, in January 2011, became the first woman president of Brazil. A strong advocate of human rights, social inclusion and equal treatment for women, she had served as a minister in the da Silva cabinet. She continued Lula's policies; at the end of 2011 Brazil's economy was ranked sixth largest in the world, and experts predicted that by the end of 2012 it would probably have risen to fifth place. Since the economic crisis at the end of the twentieth century the country had made remarkable progress. It now had arguably the most advanced industrial sector in the whole of Latin America, responsible for about one-third of total GDP. Brazil is a major supplier of minerals such as iron ore, tin, manganese, uranium, copper, zinc and gold. Manufactures include motor vehicles and spare parts, aeroplanes, textiles, steel, various types of machinery, computers and petrochemicals. Agriculture is important – Brazil is the world's largest producer of sugarcane, coffee, tropical fruits and concentrated orange juice. Although agricultural produce makes up only about 7 per cent of GDP, it amounts to over 30 per cent of exports. Brazil is also active in the realms of science and technology, including agricultural research and deep-sea oil production. Although relations with the USA are generally good, there has been a change in the nature of their relationship. Brazil was once treated very much as a subordinate; now they deal with each other almost as equals. As the Brazilian economy climbs higher in the international league table, they could easily become serious rivals in the future.

(c) Mexico

The new National Action Party (PAN) president Vicente Fox had been elected on a programme of ending government corruption and improving the economy. As a centre-right politician he was happy to have a close relationship with the USA and worked hard to improve and expand Mexico's trading partnership with the USA, and they co-operated in a campaign against drug trafficking. However, when Fox called for the frontier between Mexico and the USA to be opened so that Mexican migrant workers could move freely into the USA, the Americans rejected the idea and accused Fox of encouraging illegal immigration. On the other hand, Fox's left-wing opponents criticized him for aligning Mexico too closely with the USA. In 2002 when he proposed to visit Washington, the Mexican senate blocked the plan. Unfortunately for Fox, PAN did not have a majority in the legislature, which rejected many of his reform proposals. Farmers staged widespread protests because the government did nothing to solve agricultural problems caused by Mexico's membership of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), particularly the huge increase in imports of American produce, especially meat. Fox's presidency was something of a disappointment, although he was personally popular.

The constitution did not permit a second term; the presidential election of 2006 was won by the PAN candidate, Felipe Calderón, by the narrowest of margins. His election promises included campaigns against corruption, poverty and tax evasion; and infrastructure improvements – new roads, railways, airports, dams and bridges, all of which would help to solve the unemployment problem. But again there were economic problems: the economy was heavily dependent on the cash that millions of migrant workers sent home from the USA. In 2008 the world credit crisis caused a downturn in the US economy and in global demand generally, and this had repercussions on Mexico, which was also hard hit, suffering arguably the worst slump since the 1930s. However, a recovery was soon under way. Foreign investment began to flood in once more, so that during the first half of 2010 there was a 30 per cent increase from a year earlier. In 2012 Mexico had the second largest economy in Latin America, with about a third of its revenue coming from oil, much of which is sold to the USA. Other exports include machinery and transport equipment, various foodstuffs and live animals.

One of the great issues in Mexico and in much of Latin America is the drug-trafficking problem. Powerful cartels control the trafficking of drugs out of Latin America into the USA, a business which generates around a staggering £9 million. One of President Calderón's first actions was to declare war on drugs and deploy the army against the drug gangs. Since December 2006 an estimated 35 000 people have been killed in Mexico in drug-related violence and the country has one of the highest rates of kidnapping in the world. The president claims that his fight against the cartels is working, but still the struggle goes on. In April 2012 a summit meeting of Latin American leaders was held in Cartagena, Colombia, at which Guatemalan president Carlos Molina said that the system of merely making drugs illegal had failed, and he called for an alternative system. The summit was divided between those who advocated complete legalization of drugs and those who thought that this would be irresponsible. In Mexico critics of the president claimed that his policy of using the army against the cartels had failed and had been so expensive that more important projects, such as improving the nation's infrastructure, had been neglected. Although Mexico had the second largest economy in Latin America, there was still a long way to go before it could claim to be a genuinely 'modern' state. According to a BBC report in January 2012:

> Mexico is a nation where affluence, poverty, natural splendour and urban blight rub shoulders …. But prosperity remains a dream for many Mexicans and the socio-economic gap remains wide. Rural areas are often neglected and huge shanty-towns ring the cities.

(d) Argentina

Argentina was ruled by a military junta from 1976 until 1983, when the country returned to democracy. The junta was responsible for thousands of deaths in what became known as the 'the dirty war' to restore order and eliminate opponents. A human rights commission charged the junta with 2300 political murders, over 10 000 political arrests and the disappearance of up to 30 000 people. In an attempt to win some popularity, the junta made the mistake of invading the Malvinas Islands, held by the UK as the Falkland Islands (April 1982). Britain won an unexpected victory, recapturing the islands, and leaving Argentina with an unprecedentedly high foreign debt and inflation of around 900 per cent. There was a return to democracy for the presidential election of 1983, but the economy continued in crisis. By 1991 there were riots in protest at high food prices and unemployment. President Carlos Menem, who took office in 1991, resorted to classic neo-liberal policies: protectionist trade and business regulations were removed, strict austerity measures were introduced and there was a wave of privatizations of state-owned industries. It was all to no avail – in September 1998 Argentina moved into the worst recession for years. Ferdinando de la Rúa was elected president in 1999 and introduced more austerity measures. But the recession continued and the IMF came to the rescue twice in 2001. In November of that year, the economy seemed on the verge of total collapse and there was a financial panic; in December there was serious rioting in the capital, Buenos Aires, forcing the president to resign.

After a chaotic interval, Nestor Kirchner was elected president and came to power in 2003. An admirer of Hugo Chávez and his policies in Venezuela, Kirchner was determined to make a break with the past and reject neo-liberal economics. In his public pronouncements he savagely criticized the IMF and foreign investors. He abandoned what he called 'automatic alignment' with the USA in favour of closer ties with other Latin American countries, especially Venezuela, and with Mercosur, a sort of common market and customs union set up in 1991 to encourage free trade and political co-operation. Its original members were Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay; Venezuela joined in 2006. Kirchner raised wages and pensions for those most in need, set up a new state-run oil company and signed energy agreements and various other trade agreements with Venezuela. He encouraged greater government involvement in the energy sector, though he stopped short of renationalizing the country's main oil company, YPF, which had been sold off to a Spanish company, Repsol, during Carlos Menem's presidency. The economy soon showed signs of recovery: Venezuela began to import cattle and agricultural machinery from Argentina, and by 2008 Argentina's exports to Venezuela had quadrupled since Kirchner came to power. The economy showed an impressive annual growth rate of about 8 per cent and in January 2006 it was announced that Argentina had paid off all remaining debts to the IMF. Kirchner also won popularity when the laws granting pardon to those accused of atrocities during the 'dirty war' were cancelled, so that in 2006 many military and police personnel who thought they were safe were arrested and put on trial. Kirchner decided not to stand for re-election in 2007, and his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner was elected instead. She broadly continued her husband's policies, and against the predictions of many neo-liberal economists, Argentina's boom continued. The economy maintained its 8 per cent annual growth rate, and by the time of the next election in October 2011, the poverty rate had been halved, employment had risen to a record high, and a lucrative export market had been developed in China. It was no surprise when President Fernández was easily re-elected for a second term, winning by the largest margin since democracy had been restored in 1983. Relations with the UK were threatened by the re-emergence of the Falklands question when it was announced in September 2011 that a British company would begin drilling to exploit the Falkland's offshore oil reserves in 2016.

(e) Chile

Chile had the first democratically chosen Marxist/socialist government ever, when Salvador Allende was elected president in 1970. However, he was soon overthrown and killed in a military coup backed by the CIA. General Augusto Pinochet ruled Chile for the next 17 years, and though he did much to improve Chile's economy, it was a period of brutal repression. Following the return to democracy in 1990, Chile was ruled by presidents from the centre-left Coalition of Parties for Democracy (CPD). There were two Christian Democrats: Ricardo Aylwin (1990–4) and Eduardo Frei (1994–2000), son of the earlier President Eduardo Frei. Next came two socialists: Ricardo Lagos (2000–6) and then Michelle Bachelet (2006–10), Chile's first woman president. She was a former paediatrician and her father had been a victim of the Pinochet regime. Faced almost immediately with a strike by thousands of students demanding educational reforms, she calmed the situation and promised to put things right.

At first she continued her predecessor's economic policies and increased social spending. It was during her presidency that Chile began to move out of the period of transition from military dictatorship to genuine democracy. Clearly the classic neo-liberal economic policies were not sufficient to bring full recovery, and so the government broke the neo-conservative rules with a dose of state intervention: for example, the world's largest copper producer, Codelco, was taken into state hands and government control of capital was introduced, allowing the president to finance new social policies. As the next election (December 2009) approached, Bachelet's popularity level, which had dropped to around 40 per cent during the world debt crisis in 2008, had risen to 84 per cent. Unfortunately for Bachelet and the CPD, the constitution does not allow presidents to serve for two consecutive terms, and consequently a former president, Eduardo Frei, was endorsed as the CPD candidate. The main right-wing opponent was Sebastián Piñera, whom Bachelet had defeated in 2006. It was Piñera who won the presidency in the second round of voting in January 2010. His victory surprised many observers, bearing in mind the popularity of President Bachelet. However, the explanation for the CPD defeat was probably that Eduardo Frei failed to generate any enthusiasm and was seen as representing old-style politics. Piñera, on the other hand, concentrated his campaign on the need for greater government efficiency. Shortly after the January run-off, Chile was hit by a devastating earthquake that killed 500 people, left around a million homeless and caused damage estimated at between $15 and 30 billion. Unfortunately the new president was faced with the problem of dealing with the aftermath of the catastrophe.

(f) Bolivia

One of the poorest states in Latin America, after gaining independence from Spain in 1825, Bolivia had a long history of instability and military dictatorships. Since the Second World War the Bolivian economy was controlled by the USA, which, among other things, processed all Bolivia's tin exports. In the 1950s, when the country was trying to become more self-sufficient in spite of its limited available capital, the USA insisted that this capital should be used to pay the country's foreign debts rather than to finance its own developments designed to increase revenue. In 1964 the military seized power and in 1967 the army, with the help of US advisers, easily defeated a guerrilla campaign led by Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, who was captured and murdered on CIA orders. The army stayed in control until 1982 when Bolivia returned to democracy, with a string of presidents who took care not to antagonize the USA. In 1997 Hugo Banzer, a former general and dictator-turned democrat, was elected president. He made important progress in eliminating coca production and drug trafficking, much to the delight of the USA.

The near-eradication of coca farming by 2001 was an extremely controversial issue that was to have profound effects on Bolivia's future. Coca had been an important crop in Bolivia for around 4000 years and as Nikolas Kozloff explains, it has several legal uses:

> In Bolivia and the Andes coca leaf is legally used as an infusion to make tea. The leaf is usually chewed with a bitter wood-ash paste to bring out the stimulant properties similar to caffeine or nicotine. In the Andes, visitors are commonly offered coca tea to combat altitude sickness, which can cause headache or vertigo. Coca is also used for cosmetic products and toothpaste. Outside the region, however, coca is classified as a prohibited drug. In order to convert coca leaf into cocaine, it must be combined with other ingredients and subjected to a complex chemical process.

Thousands of coca farmers became unemployed and were plunged into poverty; the coca growers' union joined with other trade unions and social interest groups to form an organization called MAS (Movement Towards Socialism), which campaigned on a platform of decriminalizing coca and nationalizing the country's natural resources. The call for nationalization of resources was a response to the unpopular privatization of water resources by foreign companies, which led to a doubling of water prices.

In December 2005 the MAS candidate, Juan Evo Morales, was elected president. An Aymara Indian, he was the first Bolivian president to come from the country's ethnic majority. He had been a leader of the coca growers' federation and was determined to do his utmost to get coca decriminalized. In September 2006 he told the UN General Assembly in New York that coca had therapeutic uses and should not be criminalized. While agreeing that it was necessary to fight drug smuggling, he insisted that prohibition of pure coca leaf was 'an historic injustice … coca does not harm human health'. He added that criminalizing coca was simply a strategy by the USA and Europe to recolonize the Andes region. Clearly Hugo Chávez had found a courageous ally in his anti-US stand. Morales soon signed trade agreements with Venezuela and refused to have anything to do with the US-sponsored American Free Trade Area, which he described as 'an agreement to legalize the colonization of the Americas'. He added that Bolivia, Venezuela and Cuba might form 'an axis of good' in contrast to the 'axis of evil' that included the USA and its allies. Further anti-neo-liberal moves included signing new contracts with the private gas companies designed to bring in more revenue for the government; and a partial nationalization of the hydrocarbons industry. According to Noam Chomsky:

> Since the election of Morales in 2005, Bolivia's economic performance has been quite impressive. A Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) study found that in the four years since Morales took office, 'economic growth has been higher than at any time during the last 30 years, averaging 4.9 per cent annually. Projected GDP growth for 2009 is the highest in the hemisphere and follows its peak growth rate in 2008, along with "several programs targeted at the poorest Bolivians".

Morales was re-elected for a second term in 2009 with an increased majority, and MAS won a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress.

(g) Ecuador

Ecuador is another of the poorest states in Latin America. It became fully independent in 1830 and was ruled by centre-right presidents until 1895, when a revolution led to half a century of more liberal governments. The army seized power in 1972, but giving

way to popular demand, they returned the country to democracy in 1979. However, progress towards modernization was disappointing; successive governments failed to deliver on their promises of land reform, an end to unemployment and the provision of social services. In 1998 a fall in the world price of oil, Ecuador's main export, caused an economic crisis; inflation rose to over 40 per cent, and the poverty rate rocketed to around 70 per cent. Although the economy recovered quickly, the government became increasingly unpopular, because of its strict austerity measures together with blatant corruption among leading politicians. In 2006 there were huge protest demonstrations against a proposed free-trade agreement with the USA which was widely seen as a ploy to tighten US control over Ecuador's economy. The presidential election of November 2006 was won by the left-wing economist, Rafael Correa.

It soon became clear that the new president intended to follow the example of Chávez and Morales. He announced that 'the long neo-liberal night' had come to an end and promised an economic revolution to renegotiate the foreign debt and channel as much money as possible into health and education. Correa's first term was due to end in January 2011, but a new constitution was proposed which would weaken Congress, strengthen the powers of the president and allow him to stand for two further terms. His critics accused him of trying to make himself into a dictator, but in a referendum held in September 2008, the new constitution was approved by 64 per cent of voters. This now required a general election in April 2009. Correa was easily re-elected for a second term to last until August 2013, which could be extended to 2017 if he were to be elected again. In 2010 legislation was passed requiring foreign oil companies to renegotiate their contracts so that more of the profits went to the government, to be used in the campaign against poverty and its causes. Companies were warned that if they refused, they would be nationalized and forced out of the country.

These policies alienated various right-wing groups and in September 2010, after President Correa took the dangerous step of ending bonuses and other benefits for the police force, protest demonstrations broke out in which the police were heavily involved. Road blocks were set up and protesters invaded the National Assembly and the state-run TV station. When Correa tried to talk with police representatives, he was kidnapped and held hostage. It looked as though a coup was being attempted, and the president declared a state of emergency and called on the army to intervene. During the night an army unit rescued him from a hospital where he was being held; after fighting between the army and the police, order was restored and Correa continued in office.

By 2012 there were signs that Correa's social policies were working: both unemployment and poverty levels had fallen, and there had been vastly increased expenditure on roads, hospitals and schools. In 2011 Ecuador's economy grew by 7.8 per cent, helped by higher oil prices. Not surprisingly the president's popularity with the poor increased considerably, but the middle classes complained about rising prices and rising taxation, while human-rights groups accused him of making himself too powerful. Although the opposition was divided and relatively small in number, Correa had to contend with a largely hostile media. However, it was widely expected that he would be re-elected, if he decided to stand again in August 2013. Ecuador gained worldwide attention in the summer of 2012 when President Correa granted political asylum to Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, which publishes classified information, including US military and diplomatic documents. He was wanted for questioning in Sweden in relation to a rape investigation, and there was a strong possibility that he could be prosecuted in the USA over the WikiLeaks publication of confidential documents. The British government wanted to hand him over to Sweden, but from June 2012, with the situation locked in stalemate, Assange was living under diplomatic protection in the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

(h) Nicaragua

Taking office in January 2007, President Ortega had become less 'revolutionary' and toned down his anti-capitalist stand during his years in opposition since 1990. He claimed that he was now motivated by Christian principles rather than by Marxism. There were allegations of fraud during the election, and both the USA and the EU suspended their aid programmes to Nicaragua. Nevertheless, Ortega introduced new schemes to improve healthcare, social services, education (including a system of scholarships for poor students) and housing. Progress was slow – in 2011, towards the end of his term in office, the country was still the poorest in Latin America, with 46 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. On the other hand, private businesses had been allowed to continue without state interference, and the government could claim with some justification that the mixed economy had produced a period of sustained economic growth. According to Robin Yapp, writing in the *Telegraph* (7 October 2011), Nicaragua was 'helped by cheap oil from Hugo Chávez's Venezuela, which has helped to prop up social schemes like subsidized housing. Ortega has also been able to attract foreign investors who see Nicaragua as a safe haven compared to neighbouring Honduras or El Salvador which have the world's highest murder rates.'

Ortega has attracted considerable criticism from many sections of society. Some of his former left-wing supporters have left the party, accusing him of kowtowing to the neo-liberals simply in order to stay in power. Democrats claim that he is well on the way towards becoming a dictator like the Somozas. He certainly got the Supreme Court to cancel the ban on presidents standing for consecutive terms, enabling him to stand again in November 2011. Yet his popularity with the masses remains such that he won a comfortable victory, taking 62 per cent of the votes.

This chapter has shown how, during the early years of the twenty-first century, Latin America became one of the most fascinating regions of the world. Starting in Venezuela with the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, a new trend began to spread across the region. This was the change from neo-liberalism to policies which allowed a country's resources to be shared more equally among the great mass of the population, and which enabled modernization to take place. Of course there were different degrees of change: the USA did its best to divide Mexico, Chile and Guatemala from the rest by making separate trade agreements with them, so that relations between the four states are reasonably cordial. Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador and Argentina were the most decisive in their rejection of neo-liberalism, while Brazil, Nicaragua and Uruguay were middle of the road, with a mixture of policies.

There was another strand in this move towards modernization – the growth of regional co-operation between states. A number of institutions and organizations were set up; named after Simon Bolívar, the famous nineteenth-century revolutionary leader, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) was the creation of Chávez in 2004. In the words of Nikolas Kozloff, it was 'an initiative designed to encourage greater trade, solidarity and exchange between nations standing outside the usual market-based strictures' (i.e. outside the US orbit). Its activities went far beyond simple free-trade agreements, to include mutual economic and social assistance. For example Venezuela supplies Cuba with oil from its state-owned refineries at very reasonable prices and in return Cuba has sent thousands of doctors and teachers to work in Venezuela. Cuban doctors have also worked in Bolivia and provided medical supplies. In 2012 the membership of ALBA included Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Haiti and various small islands in the Caribbean. Discussions were well under way into the adoption of a common currency, the sucre, although there were problems with the small Caribbean islands which were already members of the Eastern Caribbean monetary union.

Another regional organization is the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which was set up at a meeting in the Brazilian capital in 2008. It brought together two existing customs unions – Mercosul and the Andean Community of Nations. In 2011 there were twelve member states – Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela and Uruguay. The plan was eventually to set up a South American parliament to be situated in Cochabamba, the third largest city in Bolivia.

The Bank of the South was launched in 2009 with initial capital of $20 million, the bulk of which was supplied by Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, with smaller contributions from Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay. The bank provides loans for approved social and infrastructure improvements to any Latin American country as an alternative to the IMF. However, some governments prefer to use smaller regional funds that are on offer, such as the Andean Development Corporation and the state-run Venezuelan Development Bank, known as BANDES. This has branches in Ecuador, Bolivia and Uruguay, and it has been especially helpful to Bolivia in financing educational programmes. Whichever of these alternatives the countries of Latin America decided to choose as a source of funding, the outcome would have been similar: the IMF was on the verge of being eclipsed as a force within the region. In a no-nonsense assessment of the situation, Jason Tockman, an expert on ALBA and Bolivia, declared that 'US influence through international financial institutions like the IMF has collapsed'.

And finally, some of the Latin American countries began a diversification of markets and investment, with China as an increasingly important partner. Venezuela, the leading oil exporter in the hemisphere, delivered quite a blow to Washington's energy policies. Having built up probably the closest relations with China of any Latin American country, Venezuela plans to export increasing amounts of oil to China as part of its effort to reduce its dependence on the openly hostile US government. In fact Latin America as a whole is increasing trade and other relations with China, in particular raw materials exporters such as Brazil, Peru and Chile. For Brazil, now often called 'the farmer of the world', China is now its largest trading partner. These increases are just part of the move towards a more diverse world that is causing considerable agitation among American planners and businessmen, who had assumed for a long time that their global domination would continue indefinitely. As Noam Chomsky explains:

> The former colonies in Latin America have a better chance now than ever before to overcome centuries of subjugation, violence, repression and foreign intervention. … These are exciting prospects for Latin America, and if the hopes can be realized, even partially, the results cannot fail to have a large-scale global impact as well.

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Part

VI

Global problems

Chapter

27 The changing world economy since 1900

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

For much of the nineteenth century, Britain led the rest of the world in industrial production and trade. In the last quarter of the century, Germany and the USA began to catch up, and by 1914 the USA was the world's leading industrial nation. The First and Second World Wars caused important changes in the world economy. The USA gained most, economically, from both wars, and it was the USA which became economically dominant as the world's richest nation. Meanwhile, Britain's economy slowly declined, and it was not improved by the fact that Britain stayed outside the European Community until 1973.

In spite of slumps and depressions, the general trend was for the relatively wealthy industrialized countries to get wealthier, while the poorer nations of Africa and Asia (known as the Third World), most of which were once colonies of the European states, became even poorer. However, some Third World countries began to industrialize and become richer, and this caused a split in the Third World bloc. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, new developments came to the forefront. Industrial production and some service industries began to move from the western nations into countries such as China and India, where labour was much cheaper. Western economic systems showed signs of faltering, and there was controversy about which was the most successful type of economy – the US model or the European model. Global warming, caused by the emission of gases such as carbon dioxide, produced problematic climate changes which threatened to do most harm to the poorer countries, which were least able to cope. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, beginning in the USA in 2008, the world suffered an unprecedented financial crisis in which, for a time, the entire capitalist system teetered on the edge of collapse. The US and various European governments saved the banking system with massive bailouts, but could not prevent the world from plunging into recession.

27.1 CHANGES IN THE WORLD ECONOMY SINCE 1900

In one sense, in 1900 there was already a single world economy. A few highly industrialized countries, mainly the USA, Britain and Germany, provided the world's manufactured goods, while the rest of the world provided raw materials and food (known as 'primary products'). The USA treated Latin America (especially Mexico) as an area of 'influence', in the same way that the European states treated their colonies in Africa and elsewhere. European nations usually decided what should be produced in their colonies: the British made sure that Uganda and the Sudan grew cotton for their textile industry; the Portuguese did the same in Mozambique. They fixed the prices at which colonial products were sold as low as possible, and also fixed the prices of manufactured goods exported to the colonies as high as possible. In other words, as historian Basil Davidson (see Further Reading for Chapters 24 and 25) puts it: 'the Africans had to sell cheap and buy dear'. The twentieth century brought some important changes:

(a) The USA became the dominant industrial power and the rest of the world became more dependent on the USA

In 1880 Britain produced roughly twice as much coal and pig iron as the USA, but by 1900 the roles had been reversed: the USA produced more coal than Britain and about twice as much pig iron and steel. This growing domination continued right through the century: in 1945, for example, incomes in the USA were twice as high as in Britain and seven times higher than in the USSR; during the next 30 years, American production almost doubled again. What were the causes of the American success?

1 The First World War and after

The First World War and its aftermath gave a big boost to the American economy. Many countries which had bought goods from Europe during the war (such as China and the states of Latin America) were unable to get hold of supplies because the war had disrupted trade. This forced them to buy goods from the USA (and also Japan) instead, and after the war they continued to do so. The USA was the economic winner of the First World War and became even richer thanks to the interest on the war loans it had made to Britain and her allies. Only the USA was rich enough to provide loans to encourage German recovery during the 1920s, but this had the unfortunate effect of linking Europe too closely with the USA financially and economically. When the USA suffered its great slump (1929–35), Europe and the rest of the world were also thrown into depression. In 1933, in the depth of the depression, about 25 million people were out of work in the USA and as many as 50 million in the world as a whole.

2 The Second World War

The Second World War left the USA the world's greatest industrial (and military) power. The Americans entered the war relatively late and their industry did well out of supplying war materials for Britain and her allies. At the end of the war, with Europe almost at a standstill economically, the USA was producing 43 per cent of the world's iron ore, 45 per cent of its crude steel, 60 per cent of its railway locomotives and 74 per cent of its motor vehicles. When the war was over, the industrial boom continued as industry switched to producing consumer goods, which had been in short supply during the war. Once again, only the USA was rich enough to help western Europe, which it did with Marshall Aid. It was not simply that the Americans wanted to be kind to Europe: they had at least two other ulterior motives:

- a prosperous western Europe would be able to buy American goods and thus keep the great American wartime boom going;
- a prosperous western Europe would be less likely to go communist.

(b) After 1945 the world split into capitalist and communist blocs

- *The capitalist bloc* consisted of the highly developed industrial nations – the USA, Canada, western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. They believed in private enterprise and private ownership of wealth, with profit as the great motivating influence, and ideally, a minimum of state interference.
- *The communist bloc* consisted of the USSR, its satellite states in eastern Europe, and later, China, North Korea, Cuba and North Vietnam. They believed in state-controlled, centrally planned economies, which, they argued, would eliminate

the worst aspects of capitalism – slumps, unemployment and the unequal distribution of wealth.

The next 40 or so years seemed like a contest to find out which economic system was best. The collapse of communism in eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s enabled the supporters of capitalism to claim the final victory; however, communism still continued in China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. This big contest between the two rival economic and political systems was known as *the Cold War*; it had important economic consequences. It meant that both blocs spent enormous amounts of cash on building nuclear weapons and other armaments, and on even more expensive space programmes. Many people argued that much of this money could have been better spent helping to solve the problems of the world's poorer nations.

(c) The 1970s and 1980s: Serious economic problems in the USA

After many years of continual economic success, the US began to experience problems.

- Defence costs and the war in Vietnam (1961–75) were a constant drain on the economy and the treasury.
- There was a budget deficit every year in the late 1960s. This means that the government was spending more money than it was collecting in taxes, and the difference had to be covered by selling gold reserves. By 1971 the dollar, which was once considered to be as good as gold, was weakening in value.
- President Nixon was forced to devalue the dollar by about 12 per cent and to put a 10 per cent duty on most imports (1971).
- Rising oil prices worsened America's balance-of-payments deficit, and led to the development of more nuclear power.
- President Reagan (1981–9) refused to cut defence spending and tried new economic policies recommended by the American economist Milton Friedman. He argued that governments should abandon all attempts to plan their economies and concentrate on monetarism: this meant exercising a tight control on the money supply by keeping interest rates high. His theory was that this would force businesses to be more efficient. These were policies which Margaret Thatcher was already trying in Britain. At first the new ideas seemed to be working – in the mid-1980s unemployment fell and America was prosperous again. But the basic problem of the US economy – the huge budget deficit – refused to go away, mainly because of high defence spending. The Americans were even reduced to borrowing from Japan, whose economy was extremely successful at that time. The drain on American gold reserves weakened the dollar, and also weakened confidence in the economy. There was a sudden and dramatic fall in share prices (1987), which was followed by similar falls all over the world. In the late 1980s, much of the world was suffering from a trade recession.

(d) Japan's success

Japan became economically one of the world's most successful states. At the end of the Second World War, Japan was defeated and her economy was in ruins. She soon began to recover, and during the 1970s and 1980s, Japanese economic expansion was dramatic, as Table 27.1 shows.

Table 27.1 **Gross National Product per head of the population in 1992**

Year	*GNP*
1955	200
1978	7300
1987	15 800
1990	27 000

27.2 THE THIRD WORLD AND THE NORTH–SOUTH DIVIDE

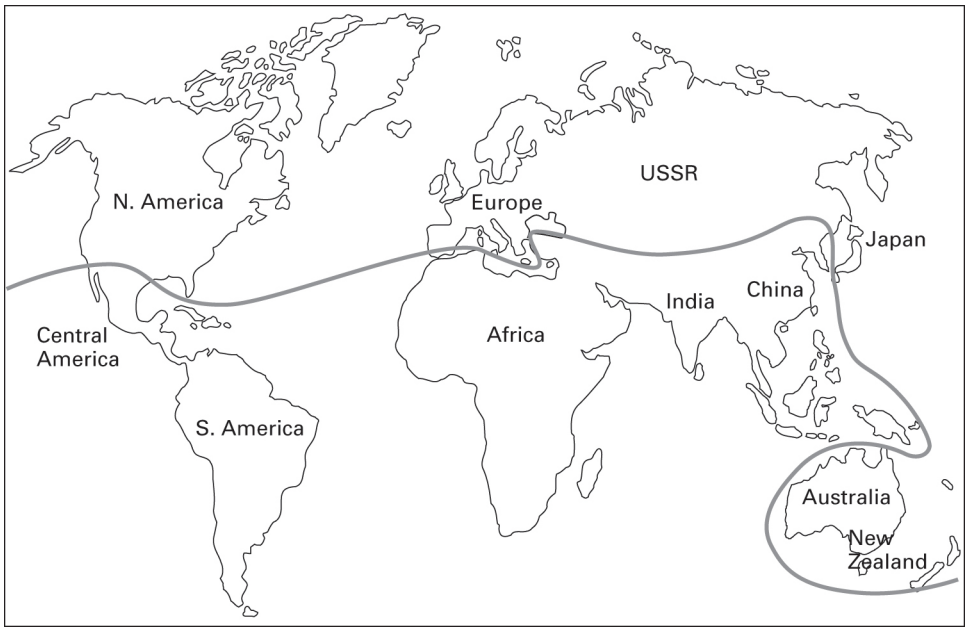
During the 1950s the term *Third World* began to be used to describe countries which were not part of the First World (the industrialized capitalist nations) or the Second World (the industrialized communist states). The Third World states grew rapidly in number during the 1950s and 1960s as the European empires broke up and newly independent countries emerged. By 1970 the Third World consisted of Africa, Asia (except the USSR and China), India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Latin America and the Middle East. They were almost all once colonies or mandates of European powers, and were left in an undeveloped or under-developed state when they achieved independence.

(a) The Third World and non-alignment

The Third World states were in favour of non-alignment, which means that they did not want to be too closely associated with either the capitalist or the communist bloc, and they were very suspicious of the motives of both. Prime Minister Nehru of India (1947–64) saw himself as a sort of unofficial leader of the Third World, which he thought could be a powerful force for world peace. Third World countries deeply resented the fact that both blocs continued to interfere in their internal affairs (neo-colonialism). The USA, for example, interfered unashamedly in the affairs of Central and South America, helping to overthrow governments which they did not approve of; this happened in Guatemala (1954), the Dominican Republic (1965) and Chile (1973). Britain, France and the USSR interfered in the Middle East. Frequent meetings of Third World leaders were held, and in 1979, 92 nations were represented at a 'non-aligned' conference in Havana (Cuba). By this time the Third World contained roughly 70 per cent of the world's population.

(b) Third World poverty and the Brandt Report (1980)

Economically the Third World was extremely poor. For example, although they contained 70 per cent of the world's population, Third World countries only consumed 30 per cent of the world's food, while the USA, with perhaps 8 per cent of the world's population, ate 40 per cent of the world's food. Third World people were often short of proteins and vitamins, and this caused poor health and a high death-rate. In 1980 an international group of politicians under the chairmanship of Willi Brandt (who had been chancellor of West Germany from 1967 until 1974), and including Edward Heath (prime minister of Britain 1970–4), produced a report (*the Brandt Report*) on the problems of the Third World. It said that the world could be roughly divided into two parts (see Map 27.1).



Map 27.1 **The dividing line between North and South, rich and poor**

The North – the developed industrial nations of North America, Europe, the USSR and Japan, plus Australia and New Zealand.

The South – most of the Third World countries.

The report came to the conclusion that the North was getting richer and the South was getting poorer. This gap between the North and South is well illustrated by the statistics of calorie intake (Figure 27.1) and by the comparison of Gross National Products (GNP) of some typical North and South countries, or 'developed' and 'low and middle' economies (Table 27.2).

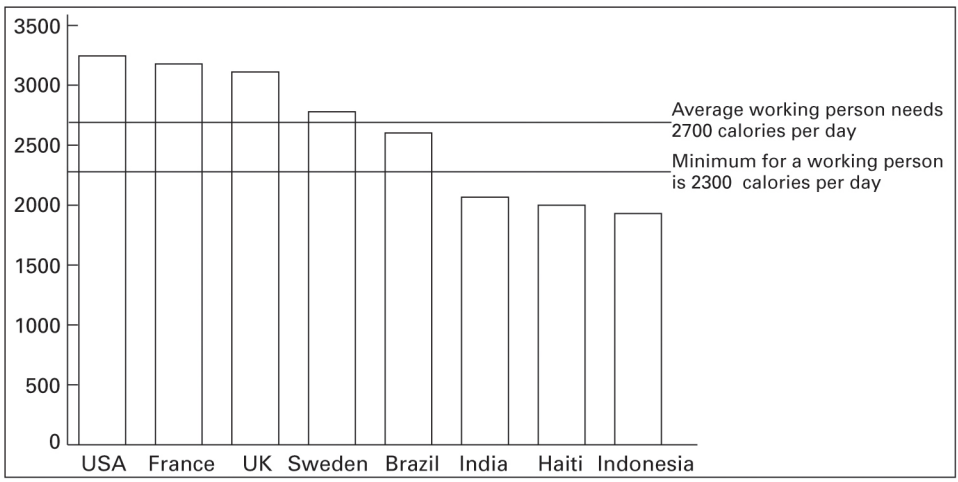


Figure 27.1 **Calorie intake per person per day**

Table 27.2 **Gross National Product per head of the population in 1992 (in US dollars)**

Japan	28 220	Libya	5310
Taiwan	10 202	Uganda	170
Hong Kong	15 380	Rwanda	250
Singapore	15 750	Tanzania	110
South Korea	6790	Kenya	330
North Korea	943	Zaire	220
Thailand	1840	Ethiopia	110
Vietnam	109	Sudan	400
China	380	Somalia	150
Peru	950	Zimbabwe	570
		Zambia	290
		Nigeria	320
Bolivia	680	Mozambique	60
Paraguay	1340	South Africa	2670
Brazil	2770	Algeria	2020
Argentina	2780		
Colombia	1290		
Chile	2730	India	310
Venezuela	2900	Pakistan	410
Uruguay	3340	Bangladesh	220
		Sri Lanka	540
		Russian Fed.	2680
Germany	21 000	Poland	1960
France	22 300	Romania	1090
Britain	17 760	Czechoslovakia	2440
Italy	20 510		
Switzerland	36 230		
Greece	7180	USA	23 120
Spain	14 020	Canada	20 320
Portugal	7450	Australia	17 070
Norway	25 800	Haiti	380
Sweden	26 780	Dominican Rep.	1040
Belgium	20 880	Guyana	330
		Jamaica	1340
		Trinidad & Tobago	3940

Source: World Bank statistics, in *Europa World Year Book 1995*.

GNP is calculated by taking the total money value of a country's total output from all units of production, wherever production is situated; and it includes interest, profits and dividends received from abroad. This total value is divided by the population figure, and this gives the amount of wealth produced per head of the population. In 1989–90 the GNP of the North averaged over 24 times that of the South. In 1992 a highly developed and efficient country like Japan could boast a GNP of over $28 000 per head of the population, and Norway $25 800. On the other hand, among poor African countries, Ethiopia could manage only $110 per head, the second lowest GNP in the world.

(c) Why is the South so poor?

- The South was and still is economically dependent on the North because of neo-colonialism. The North expected the South to continue providing food and raw materials for them, and expected them to buy manufactured goods from the North. They did not encourage the South to develop their own industries.
- Many states found it difficult to break away from the one-product economies left behind from colonial days, because governments lacked the cash needed to diversify. Ghana (cocoa) and Zambia (copper) found themselves facing this problem. In states like Ghana, which depended for its income on exporting crops, it meant that too little food would be left for the population. Governments then had to spend their scarce money on importing expensive food. A fall in the world price of their main product would be a major disaster. In the 1970s there was a dramatic fall in the world price of such products as cocoa, copper, coffee and cotton. Table 27.3 shows the disastrous effects on the incomes, and therefore the buying power of countries such as Ghana and Cameroon (cocoa), Zambia, Chile and Peru (copper), Mozambique, Egypt and the Sudan (cotton), and Ivory Coast, Zaire and Ethiopia (coffee).
- At the same time, prices of manufactured goods continued to rise. The South had to import from the North. In spite of the efforts of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which tried to negotiate fairer prices for the Third World, no real improvement was achieved.
- Although a great deal of financial aid was given by the North to the South, much of it was on a business basis – the countries of the South had to pay interest. Sometimes a condition of the deal was that countries of the South had to spend aid on goods from the country which was making the loan. Some countries borrowed directly from banks in the USA and western Europe, so that by 1980 Third World countries owed the equivalent of $500 billion; even the annual interest payable was about $50 billion. Some states were forced to borrow more cash just to pay the interest on the original loan.

Table 27.3 **What commodities could buy in 1975 and 1980**

	Barrels of oil	*Capital ($US)*
Copper (1 tonne could buy)		
1975	115	17 800
1980	58	9500
Cocoa (1 tonne would buy)		
1975	148	23 400
1980	63	10 200
Coffee (1 tonne would buy)		
1975	148	22 800
1980	82	13 000
Cotton (1 tonne would buy)		
1975	119	18 400
1980	60	9600

- Another problem for Third World countries was that their populations were increasing much faster than those in the North. In 1975 the total world population stood at about 4000 million, and it was expected to reach 6000 million by 1997. Since the population of the South was growing so much faster, a larger proportion of the world's population than ever before would be poor (see Chapter 28).
- Many Third World countries had suffered long and crippling wars and civil wars, which ravaged crops and ruined economies. Some of the worst wars were in Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Lebanon, the Congo/Zaire, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mozambique and Angola.
- Drought was sometimes a serious problem in Africa. Niger in West Africa was badly affected: in 1974 it produced only half the food crops grown in 1970 (mainly millet and sorghum), and about 40 per cent of the cattle died. As global warming gathered pace towards the end of the century, droughts became more frequent and many countries were dependent on overseas aid to feed their people.

(d) The Brandt Report (1980) was full of good ideas

For example, it pointed out that it was in the North's interests to help the South to become more prosperous, because that would enable the South to buy more goods from the North. This would help to avoid unemployment and recession in the North. If just a fraction of the North's spending on armaments was switched to helping the South, vast improvements could be made. For example, for the price of one jet fighter (about $20 million), 40 000 village pharmacies could be set up. The Report went on to make some important recommendations which, if carried out, would at least eliminate hunger from the world:

- the rich nations of the North should aim to be giving 0.7 per cent of their national income to poorer countries by 1985 and 1.0 per cent by the year 2000;
- a new World Development Fund should be set up in which decision-making would be more evenly shared between lenders and borrowers (not like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which were dominated by the USA);
- an international energy plan should be drawn up;
- there should be a campaign to improve agricultural techniques in the South, and an international food programme should be drawn up.

Did the Brandt Report change anything? Sadly, there was no immediate improvement in the general economic situation of the South. By 1985 very few countries had reached the suggested 0.7 per cent giving target. Those that did were Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and France; however, the USA gave only 0.24 per cent and Britain 0.11 per cent. There was a terrible famine in Africa, especially in Ethiopia and the Sudan in the mid-1980s, and the crisis in the poorer parts of the Third World seemed to be worsening. Throughout the 1990s the US economy boomed under the Clinton administration, whereas the plight of the Third World became even more serious. At the end of 2003 the UN reported that 21 Third World states, 17 of them in Africa, were in crisis because of a combination of natural disasters, AIDS, global warming and civil wars. Yet the richest 1 per cent of the world's population (around 60 million) received as much income as the poorest 57 per cent. Norway was top of the UN's league table for human development: Norwegians had a life expectancy of 78.7 years, there was a literacy rate of virtually 100 per cent, and annual income was just under $30 000. In Sierra Leone life expectancy was about 35, the literacy rate was 35 per cent and annual income averaged $470. The USA seemed to attract the most hostility and resentment on account of this imbalance of wealth; it was widely believed that the growth of terrorism – especially the 11 September attacks

on the USA – was a desperate response to the failure of peaceful attempts to bring about a fairer world economic system.

UN economic advisers were clear about what needed to be done. It was up to the West to remove trade barriers, dismantle its over-generous system of subsidies, provide greater debt relief, and double the amount of aid from $50 billion to $100 billion a year. This would enable poor countries to invest in clean water systems, rural roads, education and proper healthcare.

27.3 THE SPLIT IN THE THIRD WORLD ECONOMY

During the 1970s some Third World states began to become more prosperous, sometimes thanks to the exploitation of natural resources such as oil, and also because of industrialization.

(a) Oil

Some Third World states were lucky enough to have oil resources. In 1973 the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), partly in an attempt to conserve oil supplies, began to charge more for their oil. The Middle East oil-producing states made huge profits, as did Nigeria and Libya. This did not necessarily mean that their governments spent the money wisely or for the benefit of their populations. One African success story, however, was provided by Libya, the richest country in Africa thanks to its oil resources and the shrewd policies of its leader, Colonel Gaddafi (who took power in 1969). He used much of the profits from oil on agricultural and industrial development, and to set up a welfare state. This was one country where ordinary people benefited from oil profits; with a GNP of £5460 in 1989, Libya could claim to be almost as economically successful as Greece and Portugal, the poorest members of the European Community.

(b) Industrialization

Some Third World states industrialized rapidly and with great success. These included Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong (known as the four 'Pacific tiger' economies), and among others, Thailand, Malaysia, Brazil and Mexico.

The GNPs of the four 'tiger' economies compared favourably with those of many European Community countries. The success of the newly industrialized countries in world export markets was made possible partly because they were able to attract firms from the North who were keen to take advantage of the much cheaper labour available in the Third World. Some firms even shifted all their production to newly industrialized countries, where low production costs enabled them to sell their goods at lower prices than goods produced in the North. This posed serious problems for the industrialized nations of the North, which were all suffering high unemployment during the 1990s. It seemed that the golden days of western prosperity might have gone, at least for the foreseeable future, unless their workers were prepared to accept lower wages, or unless companies were prepared to make do with lower profits.

In the mid-1990s the world economy was moving into the next stage, in which the Asian 'tigers' found themselves losing jobs to workers in countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines. Other Third World states in the process of industrializing were Indonesia and China, where wages were even lower and hours of work longer. Jacques Chirac, the French president, expressed the fears and concerns of many when he pointed out (April

1996) that developing countries should not compete with Europe by allowing miserable wages and working conditions; he called for a recognition that there are certain basic human rights which need to be encouraged and enforced:

- freedom to join trade unions and the freedom for these unions to bargain collectively, for the protection of workers against exploitation;
- abolition of forced labour and child labour.

In fact most developing countries accepted this when they joined the International Labour Organization (ILO), but accepting conditions and keeping to them were two different things.

27.4 THE WORLD ECONOMY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

As the twentieth century wore on, and the North became more and more obsessed with industrialization, new methods and techniques were invented to help increase production and efficiency. The main motive was the creation of wealth and profit, and very little attention was paid to the side effects all this was having. During the 1970s people became increasingly aware that all was not well with their environment, and that industrialization was causing several major problems:

- Exhaustion of the world's resources of raw materials and fuel (oil, coal and gas).
- Massive pollution of the environment. Scientists realized that if this continued, it was likely to severely damage the ecosystem. This is the system by which living creatures, trees and plants function within the environment and in which they are all interconnected. 'Ecology' is the study of the ecosystem.
- Global warming – the uncontrollable warming of the Earth's atmosphere caused by the large quantities of gases emitted from industry.

(a) Exhaustion of the world's resources

- Fossil fuels – coal, oil and natural gas – are the remains of plants and living creatures which died hundreds of millions of years ago. They cannot be replaced, and are rapidly being used up. There is probably plenty of coal left, but nobody is quite sure just how much remains of the natural gas and oil. Oil production increased enormously during the twentieth century, as Figure 27.2 shows. Some experts believe that all the oil reserves will be used up early in the twenty-first century. This was one of the reasons why OPEC tried to conserve oil during the 1970s. The British responded by successfully drilling for oil in the North Sea, which made them less dependent on oil imports. Another response was to develop alternative sources of power, especially nuclear power.
- Tin, lead, copper, zinc and mercury were other raw materials being seriously depleted. Experts suggested that these might all be used up early in the twenty-first century, and again it was the Third World which was being stripped of the resources it needed to help it escape from poverty.
- Too much timber was being used. About half of the world's tropical rainforests had been lost by 1987, and it was calculated that about 80 000 square kilometres, an area roughly the size of Austria, was being lost every year. A side effect of this was the loss of many animal and insect species which had lived in the forests.

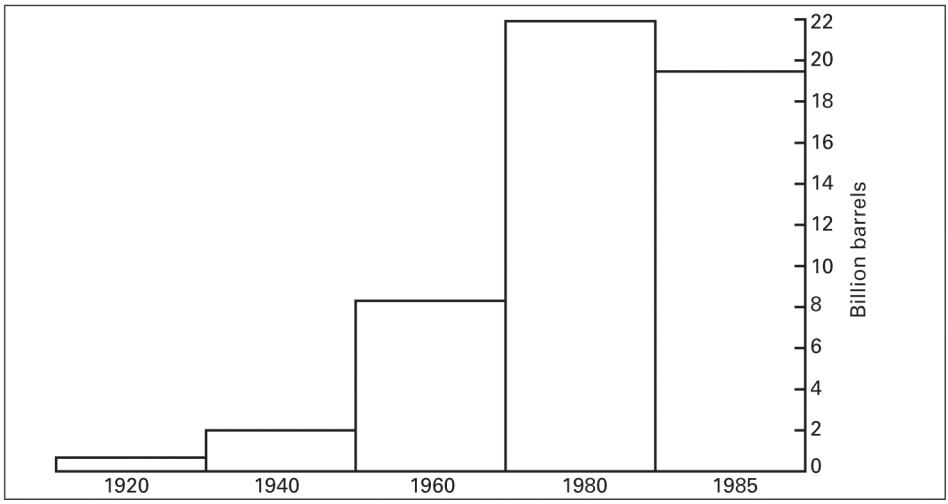


Figure 27.2 **World oil production in billions of barrels per year**

- Too many fish were being caught and too many whales killed.
- The supply of phosphates (used for fertilizers) was being rapidly used up. The more fertilizers farmers used to increase agricultural yields in an attempt to keep pace with the rising population, the more phosphate rock was quarried (an increase of 4 per cent a year since 1950). Supplies were expected to be exhausted by the middle of the twenty-first century.
- There was a danger that supplies of fresh water might soon run out. Most of the fresh water on the planet is tied up in the polar ice caps and glaciers, or deep in the ground. All living organisms – humans, animals, trees and plants – rely on rain to survive. With the world's population growing by 90 million a year, scientists at Stanford University (California) found that in 1995, humans and their farm animals, crops and forestry plantations were already using up a quarter of all the water taken up by plants. This leaves less moisture to evaporate and therefore a likelihood of less rainfall.
- The amount of land available for agriculture was dwindling. This was partly because of spreading industrialization and the growth of cities, but also because of wasteful use of farmland. Badly designed irrigation schemes increased salt levels in the soil. Sometimes irrigation took too much water from lakes and rivers, and whole areas were turned into deserts. Soil erosion was another problem: scientists calculated that every year about 75 billion tons of soil were washed away by rain and floods or blown away by winds. Soil loss depended on how good farming practices were: in western Europe and the USA (where methods were good), farmers lost on average 17 tons of topsoil every year from each hectare. In Africa, Asia and South America, the loss was 40 tons a year. On steep slopes in countries like Nigeria, 220 tons a year were being lost, while in some parts of Jamaica the figure reached 400 tons a year.

An encouraging sign was the setting-up of *the World Conservation Strategy* (1980), which aimed to alert the world to all these problems.

(b) Pollution of the environment – An ecological disaster?

- Discharges from heavy industry polluted the atmosphere, rivers, lakes and the sea. In 1975 all five Great Lakes of North America were described as 'dead', meaning that they were so heavily polluted that no fish could live in them. About 10 per cent of the lakes in Sweden were in the same condition. Acid rain (rain polluted with sulphuric acid) caused extensive damage to trees in central Europe, especially in Germany and Czechoslovakia. The USSR and the communist states of eastern Europe were guilty of carrying out the dirtiest industrialization: the whole region was badly polluted by years of poisonous emissions.
- Getting rid of sewage from the world's great cities was a problem. Some countries simply dumped sewage untreated or only partially treated straight into the sea. The sea around New York was badly polluted, and the Mediterranean was heavily polluted, mainly by human sewage.
- Farmers in the richer countries contributed to the pollution by using artificial fertilizers and pesticides, which drained off the land into streams and rivers.
- Chemicals known as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), used in aerosol sprays, refrigerators and fire extinguishers, were found to be harmful to the ozone layer which protects the Earth from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation. In 1979, scientists discovered that there was a large hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic; by 1989 the hole was much larger and another hole had been discovered over the Arctic. This meant that people were more likely to develop skin cancers because of the unfiltered radiation from the sun. Some progress was made towards dealing with this problem, and many countries banned the use of CFCs. In 2001 the World Meteorological Organization reported that the ozone layer seemed to be mending.
- Nuclear power causes pollution when radioactivity leaks into the environment. It is now known that this can cause cancer, particularly leukaemia. It was shown that of all the people who worked at the Sellafield nuclear plant in Cumbria (UK) between 1947 and 1975, a quarter of those who have since died, died of cancer. There was a constant risk of major accidents like the explosion at Three Mile Island in the USA in 1979, which contaminated a vast area around the power station. When leaks and accidents occurred, the authorities always assured the public that nobody had suffered harmful effects; however, nobody really knew how many people would die later from cancer caused by radiation.

  The worst-ever nuclear accident happened in 1986 at Chernobyl in Ukraine (then part of the USSR). A nuclear reactor exploded, killing 35 people and releasing a huge radioactive cloud which drifted across most of Europe. Ten years later it was reported that hundreds of cases of thyroid cancer were appearing in areas near Chernobyl. Even in Britain, a thousand miles away, hundreds of square miles of sheep pasture in Wales, Cumbria and Scotland were still contaminated and subject to restrictions. This also affected 300 000 sheep, which had to be checked for excessive radioactivity before they could be eaten. Concern about the safety of nuclear power led many countries to look towards alternative sources of power which were safer, particularly solar, wind and tide power.

One of the main difficulties to be faced is that it would cost vast sums of money to put all these problems right. Industrialists argue that to 'clean up' their factories and eliminate pollution would make their products more expensive. Governments and local authorities would have to spend extra cash to build better sewage works and to clean up rivers and beaches. In 1996 there were still 27 power-station reactors in operation in eastern Europe of similar elderly design to the one which exploded at Chernobyl. These

were all threatening further nuclear disasters, but governments claimed they could afford neither safety improvements nor closure. The following description of Chernobyl from the *Guardian* (13 April 1996) gives some idea of the seriousness of the problems involved:

> At Chernobyl, the scene of the April 1986 explosion, just a few miles north of the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, the prospect is bleak. Two of the station's remaining reactors are still in operation, surrounded by miles of heavily contaminated countryside. Radioactive elements slowly leach into the ground water – and hence into Kyiv's drinking supply – from more than 800 pits where the most dangerous debris was buried ten years ago.

Nuclear reactors were also at risk from natural disasters. In May 2011 a huge tsunami hit the north-east coast of Japan. As well as killing thousands of people, it flooded a nuclear power station in Fukushima. First the six nuclear reactors were battered by high waves, and then the basement, where the emergency generators were situated, was submerged, disabling the entire plant. Again the ongoing problem was how best to deal with the widespread radioactive contamination. There was a great outburst of anti-government feeling when it later emerged that the authorities had ignored and then lied about reports of design weaknesses in the reactors.

(c) Genetically modified (GM) crops

One of the economic issues that came to the forefront during the 1990s, and which developed into a political confrontation between the USA and the EU, was the growing of genetically modified crops. These are plants injected with genes from other plants which give the crops extra characteristics. For example, some crops can be made to tolerate herbicides that kill all other plants; this means that the farmer can spray the crop with a 'broad-spectrum' herbicide that will destroy every other plant in the field except his crop. Since weeds use up precious water and soil nutrients, GM crops should produce higher yields and require less herbicide than conventional crops. Some GM crops have been modified to produce a poison which kills pests that feed on them, others have been modified so that they will grow in salty soil. The main GM crops grown are wheat, barley, maize, oilseed rape, soya beans and cotton. Advocates of GM crops claim that they represent one of the greatest advances ever achieved in farming; they provide healthier food, produced in a more efficient and environmentally friendly way. Given the problem of the growing world population and the difficulties of feeding everybody, supporters see GM crops as perhaps a vital breakthrough in solving the world food problem. By 2004 they were being grown by at least 6 million farmers in 16 countries, including the USA, Canada, India, Argentina, Mexico, China, Colombia and South Africa. The main supporters of GM crops were the Americans, who were also the world's largest exporter.

However, not everybody was happy about this situation. Many people object to GM technology on the grounds that it can be used to create unnatural organisms – plants can be modified with genes from another plant or even from an animal. There are fears that genes might escape into wild plants and create 'superweeds' that cannot be killed; GM crops might be harmful to other species and also in the long term to the humans who eat them. Genes escaping from GM crops might be able to pollinate organically growing crops, which would ruin the organic farmers involved. These unfortunate farmers might find themselves being sued for having GM genes in their crops, even though they had not knowingly planted such seeds. The main objections came from Europe; although some European countries – Germany and Spain for example – grew GM crops, the amounts were small. Scientists on the whole tended to reserve judgement, claiming that there

should be long field trials to show whether or not GM crops were harmful, both for the environment and for public health. Opinion polls showed that around 80 per cent of the European public had grave doubts about their safety; several countries, including Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Greece, banned imports of individual GMs either for growing or for use as food. Americans, on the other hand, insisted that the crops had been thoroughly tested and approved by the government, and that people had been eating GM foods for several years without any apparent ill effects.

Another European objection was that the GM industry was controlled by a few giant agriculture businesses, most of them American. In fact, by 2004 the American company Monsanto was producing more than 90 per cent of GM crops worldwide. The feeling was that such companies had too much control over world food production, which would enable them to exert pressure on countries to buy their products and force more traditional farmers out of the market. The controversy came to a head in April 2004 when the USA called on the World Trade Organization (WTO) to take action. The USA accused the EU of breaking WTO free-trade rules by banning GM imports without any scientific evidence to support their case.

However, by no means does everybody in the USA support GM farming. An organization called the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has launched several cases in the Supreme Court, most notably in 2006 when a group of organic alfalfa farmers sued Monsanto for growing GM alfalfa, without first carrying out safety checks. They were afraid that their organic alfalfa would be cross-pollinated by GM alfalfa, which would make their organic alfalfa unsaleable in countries where GM crops were banned. The judgement was that the planting of GM alfalfa should stop until a full-scale investigation into possible ill effects had been carried out. A spokesman for Monsanto stated that they were confident that tests would be completed in time for the autumn planting in 2010. Encouraged by this result, the CFS organized another lawsuit against Monsanto in 2009, this time against the growing of GM sugar beet. In August 2010 a similar judgement halted the planting of GM sugar beet until the necessary tests had been completed.

At the same time not everybody in Europe was against GM farming. In Britain, for example, at the Rothamsted Agricultural Research Centre at Harpenden, experiments were being carried out with GM wheat which is resistant to several kinds of insects and should therefore need fewer pesticides. In June 2012 a group of protesters calling themselves 'Take the Flour Back' threatened to destroy the crop. Several hundred protesters, including some from France, attempted to invade the research centre, but were prevented by a large police presence. Fortunately they were persuaded to call off their plan and meet the research team for discussions. At the end of June 2012 it was revealed that recent tests in China on GM cotton crops showed that some insects were developing increased resistance to these crops, and that an increasing number of other pests were developing in and around the cotton crop, and these were affecting surrounding crops too. In other words, the early benefits were now being replaced by unexpected problems. And so the basic problem still remains: how is agriculture going to produce enough to feed the steadily growing world population, given that the amount of land suitable for agricultural production makes up only about 11 per cent of the earth's surface, and that a lot of this land is being contaminated by salt (salination), and therefore unsuitable for agriculture? Continuing global warming and rising sea levels are not likely to improve the situation (see the next section). At least there was one piece of good news in 2012 – in March it was announced that Australian scientists had tested a new strain of wheat that could increase yields by 25 per cent in saline soils. Perhaps in the end, if the world is to survive, we shall have no choice but to accept GM produce. On the other hand it could be that scientists will succeed in producing new non-GM strains of all foodstuffs, like the Australian wheat, which will give higher yields from the same size of land area.

27.5 GLOBAL WARMING

(a) Early concerns

In the early 1970s scientists became concerned about what they called the 'greenhouse effect' – the apparently uncontrollable warming of the earth's atmosphere, or 'global warming', as it became known. It was caused by large amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, three gases produced during various industrial processes and by the burning of fossil fuels, being released into the atmosphere. These gases acted like the glass roof of a greenhouse, trapping and magnifying the sun's heat. Opinions differed about exactly what its effects would be; one alarming theory was that the ice caps, glaciers and snow in the polar regions would melt, causing the level of the sea to rise, and flooding large areas of land. It was also feared that Africa and large parts of Asia could become too hot for people to live in, and there could be violent storms and prolonged drought.

Some scientists dismissed these theories, arguing that if indeed the world was becoming warmer, it was a natural climatic change, not a man-made one. They played down the threats of flooding and drought, and accused those who suggested them of being anti-West and anti-industrialization. Industrialists themselves naturally welcomed these sympathizers, and as the debate between the two camps developed, nothing was done to reduce or control emissions of greenhouse gases.

Gradually the scientific evidence became more convincing: the Earth's average temperature was definitely increasing significantly, and the fossil-burning habits of humans were responsible for the changes. The evidence was enough to convince US vice-president Al Gore, who in 1992 wrote a pamphlet advocating international action to combat the greenhouse effect. President Clinton later proclaimed: 'We must stand together against the threat of global warming. A greenhouse may be a good place to raise plants; it is no place to nurture our children.' In June 1992 the UN organized the Earth Summit conference in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) to discuss the situation. Representatives of 178 nations attended, including 117 heads of state; it was probably the largest gathering of world leaders in history. Most of them signed a range of treaties undertaking to protect the environment and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

However, signing treaties was one thing, enforcing them was quite another. For example, in 1993 when President Clinton introduced a bill to tax energy, the Republican majority in the Senate, many of whose supporters were industrialists and businessmen, threw it out. By this time many other countries were showing concern at the worsening situation. In 1995 an Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change produced a report outlining the probable effects of global warming and concluding that there could be little doubt that human actions were to blame.

(b) The Kyoto Convention (1997) and after

In 1997 another large international conference was held, this time in Kyoto (Japan), to work out a plan for reducing harmful emissions. It was appropriate that the conference was held in Kyoto, since, of all the industrialized countries, the Japanese had achieved most success in limiting their carbon emissions; and they had achieved it by heavy taxation on power and petrol. Statistics were worked out to show how much carbon each country was producing. The USA was by far the biggest culprit, emitting an average of 19 tons of carbon per head a year; Australia was not far behind with 16.6 tons per head. Japan emitted 9 tons per head a year, while the countries of the EU averaged 8.5 tons. On the other hand,

the countries of the Third World emitted very modest amounts per head – South America 2.2 tons and Africa less than 1 ton.

The target set was to return global emissions to their 1990 levels by 2012. This meant that countries would have to reduce their emissions by different amounts to comply with the regulations; for example, the USA was required to reduce by 7 per cent, whereas France needed no reduction, since by 1997 the French were producing 60 per cent of their energy from nuclear power. In the end, 86 nations signed the agreement, which became known as the Kyoto Protocol. However, over the next few years this seemed to have little effect; in 2001 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change reported that climatic conditions were getting steadily worse. The 1990s was the hottest decade of the millennium and 1998 was the hottest year. In March 2001 the Kyoto Protocol was dealt a fatal blow when newly elected US President Bush announced that he would not ratify it. 'I will not accept a plan that will harm our economy and hurt American workers', he said. 'First things first are the people who live in America. That's my priority.'

Thus, early in the twenty-first century the world found itself in a situation where the USA, with no more than 6 per cent of the planet's population, was emitting a quarter of all the greenhouse gases, and would continue to do so, whatever the consequences for the rest of the world. In 2003 the effects of global warming were increasingly worrying. The UN calculated that at least 150 000 people had died during the year as a direct result of climate change – prolonged drought and violent storms. During that summer, 25 000 people died in Europe because of the unusually high temperatures. The increased warmth and the storms provided ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes, which were spreading into mountainous areas where it had been too cold for them. Consequently the death rate from malaria increased sharply, especially in Africa. Droughts caused famine and malnutrition, so that people were more prone to catch life-threatening diseases.

(c) What happens next?

It was clear to climatologists that drastic measures were needed if dire consequences were to be avoided. Sir John Houghton, the former head of the British Meteorological Office, compared climate change to a weapon of mass destruction: 'like terrorism, this weapon knows no boundaries. It can strike anywhere, in any form – a heatwave in one place, a drought or a flood or a storm surge in another.' It was also being suggested that the Kyoto agreement, designed when climate change was thought to be less destructive, would be insufficient to make much difference to the problem, even if it were fully implemented. The tragedy is that the world's poorest countries, which have contributed hardly anything to the build-up of greenhouse gases, are likely to be the ones most seriously affected. Recently published statistics suggested that in 2004 some 420 million people were living in countries which no longer had enough crop land to grow their own food; half a billion people lived in areas prone to chronic drought. The threats are exacerbated by the pressure of the growing world population. A number of measures have been suggested:

- Professor John Schnellnhuber, director of the UK-based Tyndall Centre, which researches climate change, believes that an adaptation fund should be set up under the auspices of the UN and financed by wealthy polluters through levies based on the amount of emissions they make. The fund would be used to help poorer countries to improve their infrastructures, water industries and food production, and to cope with changes such as higher temperatures, rising river and sea levels, and tidal surges.

- A World Environment Court should be set up to enforce global agreements like the Kyoto Protocol. States must face fines large enough to deter them from breaking the rules.
- At national level, companies should be fined heavily for polluting rivers and dumping hazardous waste.
- An all-out effort should be made to develop new technologies so that 'green' power – solar, wind, tide and wave – will replace fossil fuels. Some people have suggested expanding nuclear power, an option which the French have chosen to take.

The main objections to all these alternatives are that they require fundamental changes in the way people live, and organize their countries' economies, and they will cost a lot of money to secure returns that will only become apparent in the future. A few scientists have suggested that the best thing is to do nothing at all at present, and hope that future scientists will find new and cheap methods of reducing greenhouse gases. However, in the words of Murray Sayle, 'long before that happy day, Miss Liberty may well be up to her bodice in New York harbour'. There were further worrying developments: in 2007 and 2008 a series of Gallup polls were held in 127 countries. These showed that over a third of the world's population were unaware of global warming. A survey in the USA in October 2009 showed that only 35 per cent of Republicans thought there was any reliable evidence that global warming was actually taking place. More Gallup polls in 111 countries in 2010 showed a disturbing fall in the USA and Europe in the percentage of people who thought that global warming was a serious threat. However, in Latin America the opposite was happening: an increasing number of people were worried about the effect that global warming was going to have on their families.

It was fitting that Latin America hosted the next two important conferences: the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun, Mexico at the end of 2010, and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012. There was little to show from the Cancun Conference. There was simply an agreement, not a binding treaty, that member states would aim, as a matter of urgency, to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases sufficiently to limit global warming to 2°C. Delegates from 190 nations attended the 2012 Conference in Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff told the conference that Brazil had made significant progress in reducing emissions, and was now providing 45 per cent of its energy from renewable sources, mainly hydropower. UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon pointed out that the world had not yet risen to the challenge of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by concentrating on sustainable development. The outcome of the conference was disappointing: no specific reduction targets were set and a proposed fund of $30 billion to help the transition to a green economy was dropped from the final agreement. Koomi Naidoo, the international director of Greenpeace, described the conference as an epic failure. 'It has failed on equity, failed on ecology and failed on economy.' Ban Ki-moon summed up the situation well. He pointed out that 20 years ago there were 50 billion people in the world; today there are 75 billion. By 2030 we shall need 50 per cent more food and 45 per cent more energy than we need today. 'Let us not forget the scarcest resource of all – time. We are running out of time.' As if to underline his concern, it was announced in September 2012 that sea ice in the Arctic had shrunk to its smallest extent ever recorded. Scientists were predicting that within 20 years the Arctic Ocean would be completely ice-free in the summer months. John Sauven, the head of Greenpeace UK, warned that 'we are on the edge of one of the most significant moments in environmental history as sea ice heads towards a new record low. The loss of sea ice will be devastating, raising global temperatures that will impact on our ability to grow food, and causing extreme weather around the world.'

27.6 THE WORLD ECONOMY AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

Since the USA was unquestionably the most powerful state economically during the last decade of the twentieth century, it was natural that the US economic system should come under close scrutiny. The EU, which some people saw as a rival power bloc to the USA, had a rather different view of how a market economy and society should be organized, in terms of international trade, care of the environment, aid and debt relief. According to British analyst Will Hutton, in his book *The World We're In* (2003): 'the relationship between the two power blocs is the fulcrum on which the world order turns. Managed skilfully, this could be a great force for good; managed badly, it could give rise to incalculable harm.'

(a) The American economic model

The US economic system evolved out of American traditions of freedom and the sanctity of property. The American right-wing attitude was that the law of private property and the freedom from government interference should be supreme. This was why the USA came into existence in the first place; people emigrated to the USA so that they could enjoy that freedom. It followed that the US federal government should interfere with people's lives as little as possible, its main function being to safeguard national security.

On the question of social welfare – to what extent the state should be responsible for the care of the poor and helpless – attitudes were divided. The right-wing or conservative attitude was based on 'rugged individualism' and self-help. Taxation was viewed as an invasion of private property, and government regulations were seen as restraints on freedom and prosperity. The liberal attitude was that 'rugged individualism' should be tempered by the idea of a 'social contract'. This held that the state should provide basic welfare in return for the respect and obedience of its citizens. Hence Roosevelt's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society – programmes introduced by Democrat administrations, which included large elements of social reform. For 16 out of the 24 years preceding 2005, the US had Republican governments which favoured the right-wing approach.

Both schools of thought had their supporters and champions in the USA. For example John Rawls, in his book *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford University Press, 1973), put forward a theory of 'justice as fairness'. He argued in favour of equality and claimed that it was the duty of government to provide welfare and some redistribution of wealth through taxation. In reply, Robert Nozick, in his book *Anarchy*, *State and Utopia* (Harvard University Press, 1974), argued that property rights should be strictly upheld, that there should be minimal government intervention, minimal taxation and minimal welfare and redistribution. Nozick's theories had a great influence on the New Right and were taken up by the neo-conservative branch of the Republican party. They were seen in action during the Reagan administration (1981–9), and even more so under George W. Bush (2001–9), when both taxes and welfare programmes were reduced. With neo-conservatism in the ascendant in the USA, it was only to be expected that, as the USA assumed the role of world leadership, the same principles would be extended to American international dealings; hence American reluctance to become involved in initiatives to help the Third World – on issues such as debt relief, international trade and global warming. There was no denying that the American economic system in its different variants had achieved remarkable success over the years. However, in the early twenty-first century the New Right approach was clearly faltering; many liberal Americans were looking towards the European model as a potentially better way of providing a just economic and social order.

(b) The European economic model

The economic and social systems of western, democratic Europe, which took shape after the Second World War, varied from country to country. But they all shared certain basic characteristics – provision of social welfare and public services, particularly education and health, and a reduction in inequality. It was expected that the state would take an active role in regulating business and society and in operating a tax system that redistributed income more fairly and provided the revenue to finance education and healthcare. There was also the assumption that big business had a part in the social contract – it had responsibilities to society and so must function in a socially acceptable way, looking after its employees, paying fair wages and taking care of the environment. Whereas in the USA the interests of shareholders were paramount, in most parts of Europe the perception was that the interests of the entire business must come first; dividends were kept relatively low so that high investment was not neglected. Trade unions were stronger than in the USA, but on the whole they operated responsibly. This system produced highly successful companies and relatively fair and just societies.

Outstanding examples of successful European companies include the German car and truck manufacturer Volkswagen: some 20 per cent of the company's shares are owned by the state government of Lower Saxony, shareholders' voting rights are limited to 20 per cent and the company pays only 16 per cent of its profits as dividends – none of which would be allowed to happen in the USA. Michelin, the French tyre manufacturer, and the Finnish company Nokia, the world's largest manufacturer of mobile phones, are high-performance organizations run on similar lines to Volkswagen. Another European success story is the joint German, French and British Airbus, which can claim to be the world's most successful aircraft manufacturer, surpassing even the USA's Boeing company. Western European states have generous welfare systems financed by a combination of taxation and social security contributions, and a high standard of public health and education. Even in Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, with their history of fascism and military dictatorships, the social contract exists, and unemployment insurance is the highest in Europe.

Many American analysts were critical of the European system, since during the 1990s unemployment rose in Europe, while the USA enjoyed an economic boom. The Americans claimed that European problems were caused by high taxation, over-generous welfare systems, the activities of trade unions and too much regulation. Europeans blamed their difficulties on the need to keep inflation under control so that they would be able to join the single currency launched in 1999. Europeans were confident that once that hurdle had been surmounted, economic growth and job creation would recover. European confidence in their system received a boost during the Bush administration, when it was observed that all was not well with the US economy.

(c) The American system in action

Even during the Clinton administration, the USA extended its economic principles into its global dealings. American interests usually came first, so much so that many people complained that globalization meant Americanization. Some examples were:

- During the 1990s the USA gained control of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which meant that the Americans could decide which countries should receive aid, and could insist that governments adopted policies of which the USA approved. This happened to many Latin American countries as well as Korea, Indonesia and Thailand. Often the conditions imposed made recovery harder instead of easier. In

1995, when the World Bank suggested that debt relief was vital for some poor countries, it met stiff opposition from the USA, and its chief economist felt compelled to resign. Basically these developments meant that the USA could control the world's financial system.

- In 1994 the USA used the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to force the EU to open all its voice communications (post, telephone and telegraphs) to international competition. In 1997 the World Trade Organization (WTO), which succeeded GATT in 1995, agreed that 70 countries should be opened up to US telecoms companies on American terms. By 2002 there were 180 commercial satellites orbiting in space, and 174 of them were American. The USA all but controlled the world's communications systems. It was to counter this that the EU insisted on launching its own Galileo space satellite system.
- In March 2002 the Bush administration imposed import duties on foreign steel in order to protect the American steel industry. This brought bitter protests from the EU, since the function of the WTO was to encourage free trade. The USA resisted the pressure until December 2003; then, faced with threats of retaliatory duties on a wide range of American goods, President Bush cancelled the steel tariffs. In the same month, however, the US announced new tariffs on imports of textiles and television sets from China.
- In 2003 there was one positive step which benefited poorer countries: responding to worldwide protests from states suffering the worst ravages of HIV/AIDS, President Bush agreed that the patents controlling the necessary drugs should be overridden, allowing far cheaper versions to be produced for sale in the worst-affected states. There was an ulterior motive, however: in return, the Americans were hoping to gain access to African oil and to set up military bases in strategic parts of the continent.

There was a long way to go before globalization produced a fair and just world in which wealth was more evenly distributed. Some observers believed that the way forward was in a reinvigorated and strengthened UN; others saw the newly enlarged EU as the best hope. The participation of the USA – the world's richest nation – was still thought to be vital. As Will Hutton put it: 'We badly need the better America back – the liberal, outward-looking and generous US that won World War II and constructed a liberal world order that in many respects has sustained us to this day.' South African president Thabo Mbeki summed up the world situation admirably in July 2003 when he wrote: 'The progressive politicians must demonstrate whether they have the courage to define themselves as progressive, recovering their historic character as champions of the poor, and break the icy ideological grip of right-wing politics. The African masses are watching and waiting.' Sadly, what happened next can hardly have been more disappointing for them. The participation of the USA was still very much in evidence, but not quite in the way the commentators hoped for.

27.7 CAPITALISM IN CRISIS

(a) Meltdown – The Great Crash of 2008

On 15 June 2007 Ben S. Bernanke, chairman of the American Federal Reserve Bank, made a long speech in which he extolled the virtues of the American financial system:

> In the United States, a deep and liquid financial system has promoted growth by effectively allocating capital, and has increased economic resilience by increasing our ability to share and diversify risks both domestically and globally.

There was, he said, no possibility of a financial crisis in America. Yet, little over a year later the American system and the whole global economy seemed to be on the verge of total collapse. In fact some experts had been predicting collapse for some years, but had been proved wrong. However, in March 2008 the unthinkable happened – it was revealed that one of the oldest and most respected Wall Street investment banks, Bear Stearns, was in serious trouble. It had lost $1.6 billion when some affiliated hedge funds collapsed, but much worse, it had a problem with bad debts estimated at $220 billion. Reluctantly, US treasury secretary, Henry Paulson, decided that Bear Stearns could not be allowed to collapse, since that might inconvenience or even ruin many of the rich citizens who had entrusted their wealth to the bank. There was a rule that the US government should never bail out an investment bank, so it was arranged that another bank, J. P. Morgan, should be provided with Federal Reserve funds to enable it to take over Bear Stearns. This indirect Federal Reserve bailout of Bear Stearns saved the system from collapsing. Unfortunately, it also left the impression that any other bank that got itself into difficulties would always be able to rely on a government bailout. In financial circles this was described as 'moral hazard' – the idea that there are some investors who believe that they are 'too big to fail', and who therefore take reckless risks.

The fourth largest bank on Wall Street, Lehman Brothers, had been struggling for over a year with problems of bad debts and a shortage of capital. In August 2008 it too was on the verge of bankruptcy and no other bank was willing to bail it out. In September its European branch based in London was put into administration, but there was wide expectation in the USA that the government would come to the rescue with a Bear Stearns-type deal. But this time there was to be no bailout – Tim Geithner of the Federal Reserve of New York state announced that there was 'no political will' for a Federal rescue. Lehman Brothers was allowed to go bankrupt; it was the largest US company until then ever to go bust. The collapse sent shock waves around the world, and share prices plummeted. Why was Lehman Brothers allowed to collapse? Government and state financial bosses like Paulson and Geithner were determined that there should be no such thing as 'moral hazard' – state takeovers should not become a habit, because it was seen as state capitalism. In a country that almost worshipped free-market capitalism, the idea that private companies and banks should be subsidized or taken over by the government was sacrilege. One leading financier remarked: 'I just think it is disgusting; this is not American.'

Unfortunately, the crisis worsened rapidly and the government found it impossible to maintain its free-market stance. Another struggling investment bank, Merrill Lynch, was taken over by the Bank of America (BOA). Then came the biggest sensation so far: a giant insurance company, American International Group (AIG), asked the government for a loan of $40 billion to stave off bankruptcy. Like the failing investment banks, AIG had too many bad or 'toxic' debts, as they were now being called. The government was in a dilemma: AIG was so big and had done so much business with most of the major financial institutions worldwide, that if it were allowed to collapse the repercussions would be catastrophic. Consequently it was decided that AIG should be bailed out with a government loan of $85 billion, although the state took an 80 per cent stake in the company. In effect, the US government had nationalized AIG, though the word itself was never used.

The UK banking system was already in trouble before the US crisis began, mainly because the Bank of England was reluctant to pump money into the system and failed to reduce interest rates on borrowing. The UK mortgage bank, Northern Rock, which had been forced to reduce its lending because of its own dependence on short-term borrowing, collapsed in September 2007. It was eventually nationalized at a cost of some £100 billion. In September 2008 Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) was saved from collapse when it was taken over by Lloyds TSB for £12 billion in a deal arranged by British prime minister Gordon Brown. However, its share price fell rapidly, so that only a few weeks later its value had slumped to £4 billion. This brought Lloyds TSB to its knees as well

and it too had to be rescued by the government. Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) was partly nationalized, so that it became 83 per cent taxpayer-owned. Shares in European banks followed suit; Fortis, the huge Dutch–Belgian bank, lost almost half its value in just a few days and was taken into joint ownership by the two governments. In Germany, France, the Irish Republic and Iceland, similar bailouts were taking place. And most of this happened in just a few days in September 2008. The situation was exacerbated by millions of ordinary depositors rushing to withdraw their funds from the banks. Lending between banks had more or less dried up because the inter-bank lending rates (known as LIBOR) were prohibitive.

By the time the crisis passed, the US Treasury had acquired stakes in several more major financial institutions, including Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, J. P. Morgan Chase, and two mortgage underwriters, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. The function of these last two institutions was not to provide mortgages directly to house-buyers, but to act as an insurance by underwriting mortgages given by other banks. Much of the help was provided under the Bush administration's Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) and later by the Obama administration's Public–Private Investment Program. According to an official report in July 2009, TARP had saddled the taxpayers of the USA with a debt of $27.3 trillion. By that time the crisis had developed into a global recession. The whole bailout operation was extremely controversial. President Bush was accused of being un-American and of introducing socialism. To get the TARP approved by Congress it was necessary to attach several conditions: limits on executive pay, a cap on dividends and the right of the government to take stakes in the ailing banks.

(b) What were the causes of the Great Crash?

Paul Mason, economics editor of the BBC *Newsnight* programme, sums up the causes of the crisis neatly in his book *Meltdown* (2010):

> If you exalt the money-changers, exhort them to make more money and hail the ascendancy of speculative finance as a 'golden age', this is what you get. The responsibility for what happened must lie, as well as with any banker found to have broken the law, with regulators, politicians and the media who failed to hold them up to scrutiny.

He argues that the system known as neo-liberalism that had been in operation for the last quarter of a century was mainly responsible for the catastrophe. In the words of Sir Keith Joseph, a UK Conservative supporter of the free-market system, neo-liberalism involved 'the strict and unflinching control of money supply, substantial cuts in tax and public spending and bold incentives and encouragements to the wealth creators'.

Beginning in the last decade of the twentieth century, globalization played an important role, as national economies became interlinked as never before. In the 20 years after 1990 the world's labour force doubled and with the increase in migration, became global. China and the former Soviet bloc joined the world economy. The greater availability of labour brought a fall in real wages in the leading western economies, including the USA, Japan and Germany. Yet consumption grew, made possible by a massive increase in credit and the heyday of the credit-card era. The credit boom seemed sustainable at first but after 2000 the debts began to run out of control. At the same time capital flowed around as western financiers began to invest abroad more than ever before, and this caused a huge rise in global imbalances. For example, China's foreign currency reserves grew from $150 billion in 1999 to $2.85 trillion in 2010; but between 1989 and 2007 the US deficit increased from $99 billion to $800 billion. So long as the US housing boom continued, the situation was

just about sustainable, but once house prices began to falter, chaos was unleashed as the amount of toxic debts soared. To look at the steps towards meltdown in more detail:

1 The deregulation of the US banking industry in 1999–2000

In November 1999 the US Congress passed an act designed to promote economic growth through competition and freedom. This cancelled the regulation, dating from the Depression of the 1930s, that prevented investment banks from handling the savings and deposits of the general public, and meant that they now had access to far larger funds. Banks were also allowed to act as insurance companies. A year later futures and all other derivatives were exempted from being classified as gambling and all attempts to regulate the derivatives market were declared illegal. Probably the most common type of derivatives are futures; a future is a contract in which you agree to buy something at a future date, but at a price decided on now. The hope is that in the meantime the price will go up, enabling you to sell it again at a profit. The actual contract between the two parties can itself be sold and resold several times before the agreed date. However, there is a risk involved: in the meantime the price might fall, but you still have to pay the agreed price. Another type of derivative develops when observers start betting among themselves on whether the original contract will be fulfilled. The option derivative is similar to a future except that you simply agree the option to buy, rather than actually buying the commodity itself.

The deregulation, together with the spread of the latest computer technology, was certainly a 'bold incentive and encouragement' to the bankers who now had a free hand to indulge in all these types of speculation. It enabled the derivatives market to become global, and foreign-exchange dealing increased rapidly. In the two years leading up to the crash, there was a massive rush of money into derivatives and currency trading. The statistics are staggering: in 2007 the total value of the world's stock market companies was $63 trillion; but the total value of derivative investments stood at $596 trillion – eight times the size of the real economy. It was as though there were two parallel economies – the real economy and a kind of phantom or fantasy economy which only existed on paper. Admittedly, not all the derivative dealings were speculative, but enough of them were risky to cause concern among perceptive financiers. As early as 2002 Warren Buffett, probably the world's most successful investor, warned that derivatives were a time bomb, financial weapons of mass destruction, because in the last resort, neither banks nor governments knew how to control them. Paul Mason concludes that since the end of the 1990s, 'this new global finance system has injected gross instability into the world economy'. By October 2008, even Alan Greenspan, a former chairman of the Federal Reserve, who had always claimed that banks could be trusted to regulate themselves, was forced to admit that he had been wrong. By the time the crisis peaked, some 360 banks had received capital from the US government.

2 Sub-prime mortgages and the collapse of the US housing market

The long-running housing boom in the USA reached a peak towards the end of 2005. House prices had been rising steadily and had reached levels that could not be sustained. Too many houses had been built, demand gradually fell and so did prices. The unfortunate thing was that many houses, especially during the latter stages of the boom, had been bought using sub-prime mortgages. These are mortgages lent to borrowers who have a high risk of being unable to keep up the payments, and for that reason sub-prime borrowers have to pay a higher interest rate. As house prices were rising, mortgage providers were able to repossess houses whose buyers defaulted on their mortgage payments, and make a profit from selling them on. When house prices began to fall, many lenders foolishly continued to push sub-prime mortgages, and suffered

heavy losses when the buyers defaulted. The more careful mortgage providers took out insurance to underwrite their loans, so insurance companies like AIG, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae were faced with huge payouts. Niall Ferguson, in one of his 2012 Reith Lectures, suggested that Freddie and Fannie should take a large slice of the blame for the crisis, because they encouraged people who really couldn't afford to do so to take out mortgages.

Another of the practices that contributed to the meltdown was known as collateral debt obligation (CDOs). This was the packaging together of different debts and bonds for sale as assets; a package might include sub-prime mortgages, credit-card debts and any kind of debt, and anybody buying the package would hope to receive reasonable interest payments. In fact since the year 2000, buyers, which included investment banks, pension funds and building societies, had been receiving interest payments on average between 2 and 3 per cent higher than if the debts had not been bundled up. But then several things went wrong – houses prices fell by around 25 per cent, more people defaulted on the mortgage payments than had been expected, unemployment rose, and many people were unable to pay off their credit-card debts. One estimate put the likely losses to buyers at $3.1 trillion.

3 Leverage, short selling and short-termism

These were other tactics in which banks indulged in order to make money, and which eventually ended in disaster. Leverage is using borrowed money to increase your assets which can then be sold at a profit when the value increases. Lehman was guilty of this, having a very high leverage level of 44. This means that every $1 million owned by the bank had been stretched by borrowing so that they were able to buy assets valued at $44 million. In a time of inflation like the period 2003–6, these assets could be sold at a comfortable profit. But it was gamble, because only a small downward movement in the value of the assets would be enough to break the bank. As John Lanchester explains:

> Lehman made gigantic investments in the property market, not just in the now notorious sub-prime mortgages, but also to a huge extent in commercial property. In effect, Fuld [Richard Fuld, head of Lehman Brothers] allowed his colleagues to bet the bank on the US property market. We all know what happened next.

As US house prices collapsed and the number of mortgage defaulters soared, Lehman was left with debts of $613 billion. In the words of Warren Buffett: 'when the tide goes out it reveals those who are swimming naked'.

Short selling is a strange process in which the investor first borrows, for a fee, shares from a bank or other institution which is not planning to sell the shares itself. The investor then sells the shares in the hope that their price will fall. If and when this happens, he buys the shares back, returns them to the owner and keeps the difference. It is the company whose shares are being sold and bought that suffers, as illustrated by the plight of Morgan Stanley. As the crisis deepened, investors began to move their money out. In three days 10 per cent of the cash on Morgan Stanley's books was withdrawn. The share price began to fall and this was the signal for short sellers to unload their Morgan Stanley shares, sending the share price plunging further.

Short-termism is the common banking practice of lending money for long terms and borrowing it for short terms – you issue a long-term loan and fund it by short-term borrowing yourself. When lending between banks dried up in September 2008 following the rush of depositors to withdraw cash, many banks were unable to pay out. This was because they had lent too much out on long-term loans which they could not get back immediately, and had failed to keep to the rule that they must hold a large enough 'cushion' to fall back on.

Many banks tried to get round this regulation by setting up a sort of 'shadow' banking system. Paul Mason explains how the system worked:

> The essence of the shadow banking system is that it is designed to get round the need for any capital cushion at all. Almost everybody in the shadow system was 'borrowing short' by buying a piece of paper on the vast international money market, and then 'lending long' by selling a different piece of paper into that same money market. So it was basically just traditional banking: but they were doing it with no depositors, no shareholders and no capital cushion to fall back on. They were pure intermediaries. They did it by exploiting a loophole in the regulations to create two kinds of off-balance sheet companies known as 'conduits' and 'structured investment vehicles' (SIVs). … The conduits were set up by banks in offshore tax havens. The bank would, theoretically, be liable for any losses, but it did not have to show this on its annual accounts.

Incredible as it may seem, all this was kept secret from investors, which didn't matter when all was running smoothly. But there was one huge flaw in the system: it could only work as long as bankers continued to buy and sell everything on offer. As soon as short-term credit was no longer available, bankers could not fund their long-term loans, and inevitably some pieces of paper became unsaleable.

4 Regulators and credit-rating agencies failed to do their job satisfactorily

Since 2000, thanks to the actions of both the US and UK governments, regulation of the banking system had been exercised with what can only be described as a light touch. The politicians were apparently happy to continue this non-interventionist attitude since bankers had played an important part in achieving the consumer boom and full employment. They mistakenly believed that bankers could therefore be trusted not to do anything too risky. The credit-rating agencies were the second line of defence against high risk. The three main agencies are Standard and Poor's, Moody's and Fitch. Their job is to carry out a risk-assessment process on banks, companies and assets and award grades showing investors whether or not it would be safe to do business with them. The safest gets an AAA rating, while BB or less indicates a high-risk institution or commodity. Between 2001 and 2007 the amount of money paid to the three main credit rating agencies doubled, reaching a total of $6 billion. Yet an official report published in July 2007 was highly critical of the work of the rating agencies. They were accused of being unable to show convincing evidence that their methods of assessment were reliable, especially in the case of CDOs. They were unable to cope with the vast increase in the amount of new business that they were called on to do since 2000. Many critics saw the whole system as suspect: the fact that institutions and sellers of bonds actually paid for their own ratings invited 'collusion'; if they gave the correct ratings, they risked upsetting the banking business and losing market share. As a result, no decisive action was taken until it was too late. For example, it was only a matter of hours before the British HBOS collapsed in September 2008 that Standard and Poor's downgraded it, and even then the comforting phrase, 'but the outlook is stable', was added.

(c) The aftermath of the crash

Although the capitalist financial system had been saved from total collapse, the consequences of the crisis were clearly going to be felt for a long time. As the money supply dried up, demand for goods fell, and across the world, manufacturing industry slumped.

Many of the weakest companies went to the wall and unemployment rocketed. In the USA in the first few months of 2009, it was calculated that around half a million jobs a month were being lost. The great exporting nations like China, Japan, South Korea and Germany suffered huge falls in exports. Although central bank interest rates were almost zero in the USA and Britain, nobody was investing to try to stimulate the still declining economy. Attempts to deal with this problem included:

- Fiscal stimulus provided by governments and central banks. As early as November 2009 the Chinese government had decided to supply cash worth $580 billion over the next two years to fund various environmental projects. Banks were encouraged to lend vast sums of money, guaranteed by the state, to fund other projects. Millions of new jobs were created, and within a few months China's economic growth rate had recovered and surpassed its previous high point. The main problem was the uncertainty about how risky those massive bank loans were.
- In the USA, newly elected Democrat president Barack Obama's fiscal stimulus of $787 billion went into operation in February 2009. It was a controversial move because the Republican party was totally against it; even in a crisis as serious as this, they believed that the state should not be expected to provide help. A right-wing Republican group calling themselves the Tea Party Movement launched an anti-stimulus protest campaign encouraging Republican state governors not to accept stimulus money. Although the US economy did begin to grow again towards the end of 2009 and continued slowly through 2010, there were still 15 million unemployed at the end of the year.

  In the EU the effects of the crisis varied among its 27 member states. They experienced different degrees of recession, though the average growth reduction at the end of 2009 was 4.7 per cent. The three Baltic states fared the worst, suffering full-scale slump: Estonia's GDP fell by 14 per cent, Lithuania's by 15 per cent and Latvia's by 18 per cent. France did best, losing only 3 per cent of GDP. Most states borrowed heavily in order to launch fiscal-stimulus packages. For example, in 2009 France's borrowing was equivalent to 8 per cent of GDP and Britain's was 11 per cent. These amounts were quite small compared with America's and China's, but in the case of France they were successful: as early as August 2009 the French economy was growing again. The problem was that they were all left with massive national debts. Those countries which had signed up to the Maastricht Agreement of 1991 had broken the rules that borrowing must not exceed 3 per cent of GDP and total debt must be limited to 60 per cent of GDP.
- Quantitative easing (QE). This was the practice, first thought of by John Maynard Keynes back in the 1930s, of increasing the amounts of cash in circulation by 'printing money'. In fact nowadays banks do not actually print new notes; the central banks simply invent or create more money which is added into their reserves, and then used to buy up government debts. The UK was the first to use QE in March 2009 when a modest £150 billion was 'created', and this to some extent helped to put demand back into the system. According to Paul Mason, 'Britain's "pure" QE strategy saw it inject around 12 per cent of GDP into the economy. The Bank of England estimates this should, over a period of three to four years, filter through into a 12 per cent increase in the money supply and thus in demand.' The USA adopted QE soon after Britain. However, the European Central Bank rejected QE on the grounds that it would threaten the stability of the euro. It was argued that simply making more of the existing money available to eurozone banks and buying AAA-rated bonds would be sufficient to stimulate demand. But demand was not sufficiently stimulated and consequently the value of the euro was weakened. By the end of 2009 the eurozone was in big trouble as the cost of all the fiscal stimulus and bank bailouts had to be

faced. Some economists were already predicting that the zone was on the verge of break-up. In fact some economists and politicians *hoped* it would break up, so this seemed an unmissable opportunity!

(d) The eurozone in crisis

The financial crisis in Greece sparked things off. In October 2009 the newly elected social-democrat government discovered that the country's budget deficit – which stood at 6 per cent according to the previous government – was in reality 12.7 per cent. Over half its actual debt, with a little assistance from Goldman Sachs, had been moved into the shadow-banking system, 'off balance sheet'. It later emerged that there were serious flaws in the Greek system that had allowed massive tax evasion and other corrupt practices, such as pensions still being paid to families of the deceased. The immediate problem was that Greece had financed its national debt with short-term loans, a quarter of which were due for repayment in 2010. How were they going to find the necessary €50 billion? The first step was to introduce strict austerity policies – cuts in pensions, wages and social services and a campaign to eliminate tax evasion. Eventually in May 2010 the eurozone banks and the IMF agreed a loan of €110 billion to Greece, provided they fulfilled the austerity programme. This was extremely unpopular with the Greeks, and resulted in strikes and two general elections over the next two years. By the autumn of 2011, there seemed a real danger that Greece would default on its debts. Worried about the disastrous effects this might have on other members of the eurozone, leaders agreed to write off half of Greece's debts to private creditors.

Meanwhile some other eurozone countries had also got themselves too heavily in debt. In November 2011 the Republic of Ireland had to be helped with a bailout of €85 billion. Portugal, which had suffered crippling competition from Germany and China, was on the verge of bankruptcy. In July 2011 Moody's had downgraded Portugal's debt to 'junk' status, and in October it too received an IMF bailout. Portugal had the lowest GDP per capita in western Europe and in March 2012 the unemployment rate was around 15 per cent. By August 2011 Spain and Italy had drifted into the danger zone. Paul Mason explains what happened next (in *Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions* (2012)):

> The European Central Bank was forced to break its own rules and start buying up the debt of these two massive, unbailable economies. The dilemma throughout the euro crisis has been clear: whether to impose losses from south European bad debts onto north European taxpayers, or onto the bankers who had actually lent the money to these bankrupt countries in the first place. The outcome was always a function of the level of class struggle. By hitting the streets, Greek people were able to force Europe to impose losses on the bankers; where opposition remained within traditional boundaries – the one-day strike, the passive demo – it was the workers, youth and pensioners who took the pain. Meanwhile Europe itself was plunged into institutional crisis. Monetary union without fiscal union had failed.

27.8 THE WORLD ECONOMIES IN 2012

At the turn of the millennium, 'globalization' had been the buzzword. It seemed to promise huge benefits for the world – increased connectivity between countries, faster growth, greater transfer of knowledge and wealth, and perhaps even a fairer distribution of wealth. Economists talked about the 'BRIC' countries, meaning Brazil, Russia, India and China. These were the world's fastest growing and largest emerging market economies, and

between them they contained almost half the world's population. Many economists were predicting that it was only a matter of time before China became the largest economy in the world, probably some time between 2030 and 2050. Goldman Sachs believed that by 2020 all the BRIC countries would be in the world's top 10 economies, and that by 2050 they would be the top four, with China in first place. The USA was expected to have been relegated to fifth place.

There were differing views about actual details of how this scenario would play out. In 2008 the BRIC countries held a summit conference. Many analysts got the impression that they had ulterior motives of turning their growing economic strength into some kind of political power. They could carve out the future economic order between themselves. China would continue to dominate world markets in manufactured goods, India would specialize in providing services, while Russia and Brazil would be the leading suppliers of raw materials. By working together in this way the BRIC states can present an effective challenge to the entrenched interests and systems of the West. However, the fact that these four countries have very little in common could mean that any economic and political co-operation would only be temporary, or rather artificial. Once China becomes the world's largest economy, it might not need the other three. In that case it could be China and the USA that work together to lead the global economy.

It was not immediately obvious how the 2008 meltdown would affect the BRIC nations. Many economists believed it would be possible for them to 'decouple' themselves from the West and continue growing. This turned out not to be the case and many commentators began to doubt whether globalization had been a 'good thing' after all. It seemed as if it had made the world economy less stable, more volatile, and more vulnerable to the danger of a crisis in one country infecting the rest of the world. A brief survey of the world's leading states shows that, unfortunately, very few were able to avoid the contagion. As a report from Crédit Suisse said: 'We may not be at the brink of a new global recession, but we are even less likely to be at the threshold of a global boom.'

(a) China

As we saw earlier, the financial crisis of 2008 caused an immediate drop in China's exports. China launched a great spending spree in 2008 and 2009 to improve the country's infrastructure and launch a number of environmental projects. This seemed to work at first and China's growth rate soon recovered. However, this policy was continued through 2010 and 2011 when the total investment was an unprecedented 49 per cent of China's GDP. There were several problems with this state of affairs. Most observers believed that there was a limit to the number of roads, airports and high-rise flats that China could keep on building, and they feared that there had been an unsustainable building bubble that was about to burst, just as similar bubbles burst earlier in the USA, Spain and Portugal. The concentration on domestic consumption and reduced demand from overseas meant that exports, and therefore revenue from exports, were continuing to decline, and the growth rate was slowing. The Chinese themselves were extremely nervous about their own vulnerability in view of the continuing crisis in the eurozone. So much so that in June 2012, along with India, they contributed tens of billions of dollars to the IMF's emergency fund for tackling the EU's ongoing problems.

(b) Brazil

Like China, Brazil initially responded well to the 2008 economic crisis, launching a massive property-building project. This created thousands of new jobs and unemployment

fell to its lowest level for many years. Domestic demand continued at a high level. The economy continued to grow, receiving a huge boost with the discovery of more oil and gas reserves off the coast. By 2012 Brazil had become the world's ninth largest oil producer, and was hoping eventually to become the fifth largest. It had overtaken Britain and was now rated to be the sixth largest economy in the world. Other good news was that poverty was decreasing – over the last few years, the incomes of the poorest 50 per cent of the population have increased by almost 70 per cent. Brazil hosted the 2014 soccer World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics took place in Rio de Janeiro.

However, the latest reports suggest that all is not well in Brazil. House prices in Rio have trebled since 2008, causing mortgage borrowing to rocket and raising the prospect of yet another crash if and when the housing bubble should burst. Since some of Brazil's main exports included raw materials and oil to China, the slow-down in Chinese exports of manufactured goods and the general decline in global demand did not bode well for Brazil's export trade, especially taking into account the 30 per cent fall in oil prices. Domestic demand fell as consumer confidence waned, and all the analysts were predicting a dramatic slowdown in growth.

(c) India

India's economy had been expanding rapidly and words like 'dynamic' and 'rampaging Asian tiger' had been used to describe it. However, as the financial crisis hit the USA and Europe, demand for Indian goods plummeted and was still falling in 2012. In fact, Indian exports fell by a further 3 per cent in the year from May 2011 to May 2012. As the economy slowed down, investors began to desert India, preferring something safer, like the US dollar. This sent the value of the rupee plunging until in June 2012 it reached a record low against the dollar. In theory this should help Indian exports, which would be cheaper; but on the other hand it made India's imports more expensive, and this pushed up the cost of living, making even essentials difficult to afford. In addition India had further problems: much of its infrastructure was in a dilapidated state, and businesses complained of being hampered by corruption, bribery and unnecessary bureaucracy. The country's current account deficit stood at $49 billion in June 2011 and was estimated to be $72 billion at the end of 2012, which would be over 4 per cent of India's GDP. According to Morgan Stanley, a sustainable deficit ought to be no more than 2 per cent of GDP. Standard and Poor's and Fitch both reduced their ratings of the Indian economy to 'negative', though Moody's continued to rate it as 'stable'. Clearly India had failed to 'decouple' itself from the problems of the eurozone. Desperate for the eurozone crisis to be resolved, in June 2012 India joined China in making a substantial contribution to the IMF's emergency fund.

(d) Russia

Up until 2008 the Russian economy enjoyed ten years of spectacular growth thanks mainly to high oil prices. GDP increased tenfold, and by 2008 revenues from oil and gas were worth around $200 billion, about one-third of total revenue. The fact that the economy was so dependent on the price of oil meant that there could be no 'decoupling' from the rest of the world's economic problems. The rapid fall in oil prices and in demand for oil had a disastrous effect on Russia: in 2008 the price per barrel plunged from $140 to $40, causing a drastic fall in revenue. The foreign credits that Russian banks and businesses had relied on quickly dried up, leaving many firms unable to pay their debts. The government was forced to help them by providing $200 billion to increase liquidity in the Russian

banking sector. The Russian Central Bank also spent a third of its $600 billion international currency reserve fund to slow down the devaluation of the rouble. Fortunately, by the middle of 2009 the slump had bottomed out and the economy began to grow again. In 2011, as well as becoming the world's leading oil producer, surpassing Saudi Arabia, Russia also became the second largest producer of natural gas and the third largest exporter of steel and aluminium. The high price of oil in 2011 helped the recovery and enabled Russia to reduce the large budget deficit that had accrued during the lean period in 2008 and early 2009.

However, recognizing the danger of being too dependent on oil, the government successfully encouraged the expansion of other areas. In 2012 Russia was the world's second largest producer of armaments, including military aircraft, after the USA, and the IT industry had a year of record growth. Companies making nuclear power plants were expanding, and several plants were exported to China and India. In 2012 statistics showed that Russia was the third richest country in the world in terms of cash reserves; inflation had been reduced and unemployment had fallen. Nor was the expansion confined to Moscow and St Petersburg; other cities, including Nizhny Novgorod, Samara and Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), were playing an important role in the diversification of industry. Of the four BRIC nations Russia was clearly the strongest economically.

(e) The USA

Unemployment, which had stood at 15 per cent at the end of 2010, continued to fall, but only slowly. Fitch ratings agency estimated that President Obama's fiscal stimulus packages boosted US GDP by 4 per cent over the following two years. However, according to a *Guardian* report (27 June 2012), 'the US economy is still limping along with very slow growth and a high rate of unemployment. Although the economy has been expanding for three years, the level of GDP is still only 1 per cent higher than it was nearly five years ago. Recent data shows falling real personal incomes, declining employment gains, and lower retail sales.' Another problem was that, although mortgage interest rates were low, house prices have continued to fall and in 2012 were 10 per cent lower in real terms than they were two years ago.

At the end of June 2012 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Paris-based group of independent economists from 34 countries, produced its biannual report on the US economy. This confirmed that the US recovery remained fragile and pointed out that two of the main problems were record long-term unemployment and the widening gap between the poor and the wealthy. About 5.3 million Americans, 40 per cent of unemployed people, have been out of work for six months or more. Poverty in the US is worse than in Europe, and of the 34 OECD member states, only Chile, Mexico and Turkey rank higher in terms of income inequality. The report also suggested measures to remedy the situation:

- Equalize tax rates by ending tax breaks for the very wealthy – in other words, make the rich pay more. Earlier in 2012 the government proposed a measure to make sure that everyone making more than a million dollars a year pays at least 30 per cent in tax. Predictably, this was strongly opposed by the Republicans.
- Provide more investment for education and innovation, and more training programmes to get the long-term unemployed back to work.
- Increase gas prices to help reduce the use of fossil fuels.
- The government should reduce spending, but only gradually, rather than make drastic cuts; these might discourage business investment and slow growth even further.

How the situation would develop depended very much on the results of the presidential and congressional elections held in November 2012. Tax cuts for the wealthy introduced during the Bush administration were due to end on 31 December 2012. Another hangover from the Bush era was that automatic spending cuts would be applied at the end of 2012. The cuts involved, dubbed 'the fiscal cliff', would amount to $1.2 trillion.

(f) The European Union

In the summer of 2012 the future looked uncertain. In June there were tense elections in Greece when the party that was prepared to continue the austerity policy won a narrow victory over the socialist party that resented having austerity forced on the country by outsiders, and was determined to abandon the euro. And so the euro survived again. There was also resentment in some of the more economically successful north European states, especially in Germany, at having to bail out what many saw as the 'feckless, reckless and lazy' south. The most likely outcome seemed to be that the taxpayers of northern Europe would bail out the south and would, in effect, take control of overall eurozone economic policy, so that the eurozone would become much closer to being a fiscal union, and therefore, to some extent, a political union as well. Of course the governments of southern Europe resisted losing overall control of their economic policies; but without a bailout of some sort – the eurozone seemed likely to disintegrate.

On the other hand, many economists and financiers believed that the euro must be saved. In September 2012 Mario Draghi, the president of the European Central Bank (ECB), announced: 'We say that the euro is irreversible. So, unfounded fears of reversibility are just that – unfounded fears.' It was felt that the collapse of the euro would throw the entire global economy into chaos. Certainly Germany wanted the euro saved, because the cheap euro benefited German exports, whereas a strong Deutschmark would do considerable damage to their exports. Hopes for the survival of the euro revived in September 2012 when Mario Draghi unveiled a rescue plan that involved the ECB buying up the bonds of Spain and Italy, the two eurozone countries after Greece most heavily in debt. Those governments could then request a bailout from the ECB which would be granted, provided they agreed to implement strict austerity measures. The announcement of the plan received a glowing reception across most of Europe; stock markets soared on both sides of the Atlantic, and so did confidence in the euro's survival. This was sufficient to bring down borrowing costs for Spain and Italy, and their future seemed brighter. Even the Germans agreed to go along with the scheme. At first the German Bundesbank condemned the whole idea as 'tantamount to financing governments by printing banknotes'. But eventually, after pressure from Chancellor Merkel and Mario Draghi himself, followed a few days later by the approval of the German constitutional court, the Bundesbank, albeit rather grudgingly, agreed to back the plan. The European Stability Mechanism (ESM), as it was now known, was poised to go into operation with the creation of a rescue fund of €500 billion.

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Chapter

28 The world's population

SUMMARY OF EVENTS

Before the seventeenth century, the world's population increased very slowly. It has been estimated that by 1650 the population had doubled since the year AD 1, to about 500 million. Over the next 200 years the rate of increase was much faster, so that by 1850 the population had more than doubled to 1200 million (1.2 billion). After that, the population growth accelerated so rapidly that people talked about a population 'explosion'; in 1927 it reached the 2 billion mark. By the year 2000 it had passed 6 billion and at the end of 2011 it reached 7 billion. In 2003 the UN calculated that if the population continued to increase at the same rate, the global total would be somewhere between 10 billion and 14 billion by 2050, depending on how effectively family planning campaigns were carried out. It was also estimated, given the much lower birth rates in the developed world, that almost 90 per cent of the people would be living in the poorer countries. During the 1980s the spread of HIV/AIDS reached pandemic proportions; most countries in the world were affected, but again it was the poor nations of the Third World which suffered worst. This chapter examines the causes of the population 'explosion', the regional variations, the consequences of all the changes, the attempts at population control and the impact of AIDS.

28.1 THE INCREASING WORLD POPULATION SINCE 1900

(a) Statistics of population increase

It is easy to see from the steeply climbing population total in Figure 28.1 why people talk about a population 'explosion' in the twentieth century. Between 1850 and 1900 the world's population was increasing, on average, by 0.6 per cent every year. During the next 50 years the rate of increase averaged 0.9 per cent a year; it was after 1960 that the full force of the 'explosion' was felt, with the total world population increasing at the rate of 1.9 per cent a year, on average. In 1990 the population was increasing by roughly a million every week, and the total had reached 5300 million. In 1994 there was an increase of 95 million, the biggest ever increase in a single year so far. In 1995 the record was broken again, as the total population grew by 100 million to 5750 million. According to the Population Institute in Washington, 90 per cent of the growth was in poor countries 'torn by civil strife and social unrest'. During 1996 a further 90 million were added to the population, and by 2000 the global total was well past 6 billion. It topped the 7 billion mark at the end of 2011.

However, there were important regional variations within the general population increase. Broadly speaking, the industrialized nations of Europe and North America had their most rapid increase before the First World War; after that their rate of increase slowed considerably. In the less developed, or Third World nations of Africa, Asia and

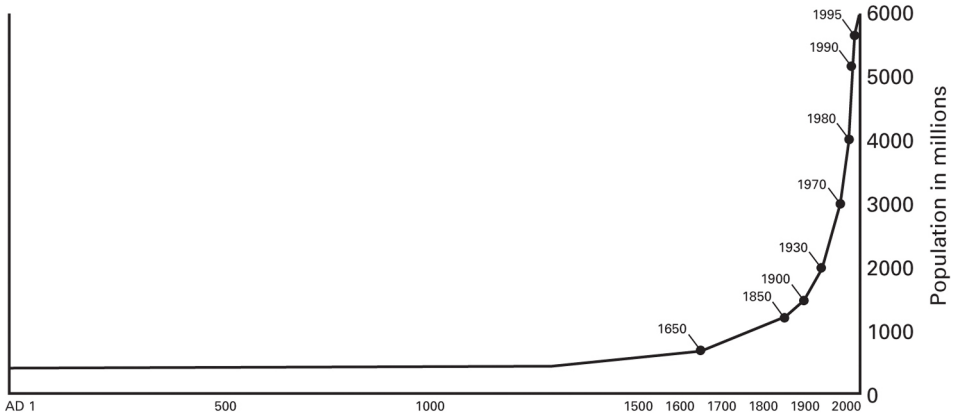

Figure 28.1 **World population increases from AD 1 to 1995**

Latin America, the rate of population increase accelerated after the Second World War, and it was in these areas that population growth caused the most serious problems. The growth rate began to slow down in some Latin American countries after 1950, but in Asia and Africa the rate continued to increase. Figure 28.2, which is based on statistics provided by the United Nations, shows:

1 The percentage rates at which the world's population grew between 1650 and 1959.
2 The percentage rates of population increase in the different continents during the periods 1900–50 and 1950–9.

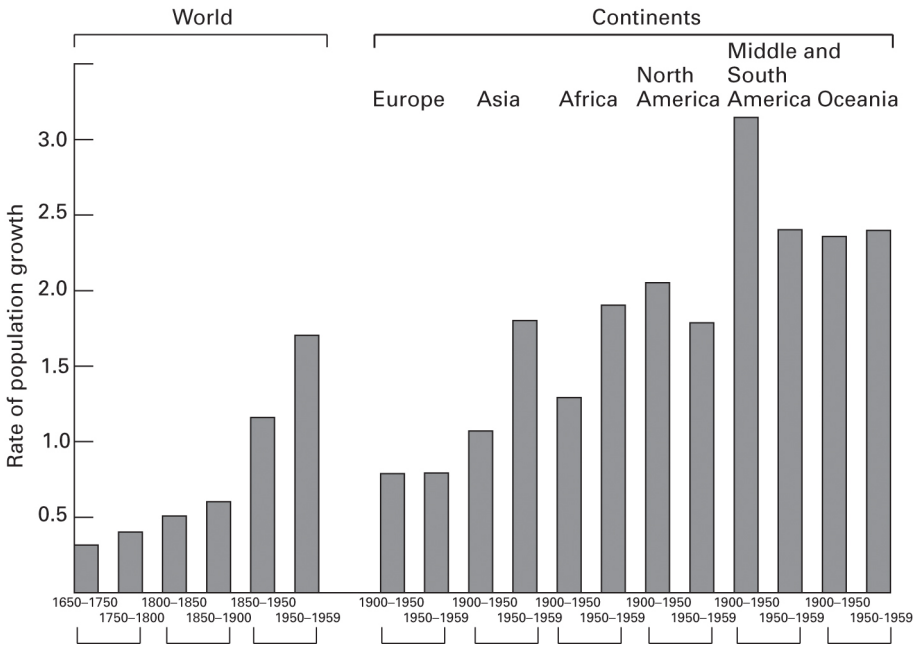

Figure 28.2 **Rate of population growth by regions**

(b) Reasons for the population increase

The population increase in Europe and North America in the later part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries had several causes.

- Increasing industrialization, economic growth and prosperity meant that the necessary resources were available to sustain a larger population, and the two seemed to go hand in hand.
- There was a great improvement in public health, thanks to advances in medical science and sanitation. The work of Louis Pasteur and Joseph Lister in the 1860s on germs and antiseptic techniques helped to reduce the death rate. At the same time, the big industrial cities introduced piped water supplies and drainage schemes, which all helped to reduce disease.
- There was a decline in infant mortality (the number of babies who died before the age of 1). Again this was mainly thanks to medical improvements, which helped to reduce deaths from diseases such as scarlet fever, diphtheria and whooping cough, which were so dangerous to young babies. The improvement in some countries can be seen in Table 28.1, which shows how many babies per thousand born, died within their first year.
- Immigration helped to swell the population of the USA and, to a lesser extent, some other countries on the continents of America, such as Canada, Argentina and Brazil. In the 100 years after 1820, some 35 million people entered the USA; in the last few years before 1914, they were arriving at a rate of a million a year.

After 1900 the growth rate in Europe began to slow down, mainly because more people were using modern contraceptive techniques. Later, the economic depression of the 1930s discouraged people from having as many children.

The rapid population growth after 1945 in Third World countries had three main causes:

- *Modern medical and hygiene techniques* began to make an impact for the first time; the child mortality rate fell and people lived longer, as killer diseases like smallpox, malaria and typhoid were gradually brought under control.
- *At the same time, the vast majority of the population made no attempt to limit their families by using contraceptives*. This was partly through ignorance and partly because contraceptives were too expensive for ordinary people to buy. The Roman Catholic Church said that contraception was forbidden for its members, on the grounds that it prevented the natural creation of new lives, and was therefore sinful. Since the Roman Catholic Church was strong in Central and South America, its teaching had important effects. The population growth rate for many countries in these areas was over 3 per cent per annum. The average for the whole of Latin

Table 28.1 **Deaths within one year of birth, per thousand births**

	England	*Switzerland*	*France*	*Italy*	*Austria*
1880–90	142	165	166	195	256
1931–38	52	43	65	104	80

America was 2.4 per cent in 1960, whereas the average for Europe was only 0.75 per cent. *An increase of 2 per cent per annum means that the population of that country doubles in about 30 years*. This happened in Brazil and Mexico in the 30 years up to 1960.

- Many Third World countries have a long tradition of people *having as many children as possible to combat high infant mortality*, in order to make sure their family continues. Some cultures, Muslims, for example, attach great value to having many sons. The same attitudes persisted in spite of the reduction in infant mortality.

28.2 CONSEQUENCES OF THE POPULATION EXPLOSION

(a) The industrializing nations of Europe and North America

The population growth of the nineteenth century helped to stimulate further economic development. There was a plentiful workforce and more people to buy goods, and this encouraged more investment and enterprise. Nor were there any great problems about feeding and educating these growing numbers, because prosperity meant that the necessary resources were available. Later on, there were unexpected effects on the age structure of the population in the developed nations. This was especially true in Europe where, because of the very low birth rates and longer life expectancy, a growing proportion of the population was over 65. By the 1970s, in countries such as Sweden, France and Britain, about 15 per cent of the population were over 65. In the early 1990s, with this proportion still increasing, questions were being asked about whether state welfare systems would be able to afford to pay pensions to all old people if this trend continued into the twenty-first century.

(b) The Third World

The rapid population growth caused serious problems: some countries, like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, became overcrowded and there was insufficient land to go round. This forced people to move into towns and cities, but these were already overcrowded and there were not enough houses or jobs for all the new arrivals. Many people were forced to live on the streets; some cities, especially those in Latin America, were surrounded by shanty-towns and slums which had no proper water supply, sanitation or lighting.

(c) It became increasingly difficult to feed the population

All areas of the world succeeded in increasing their food production during the late 1960s and 1970s, thanks to what became known as the ‘green revolution’. Scientists developed new strains of heavy-cropping rice and wheat on short, fast-growing stems, helped by fertilizers and irrigation schemes. For a time, food supplies seemed to be well ahead of population growth; even a densely populated country like India was able to export food, and China became self-sufficient. In the USA crop yields increased threefold between 1945 and 1995, and the Americans were able to export surplus crops to over a hundred countries. However, in the mid-1980s, with the world’s population growing faster than ever, the ‘green revolution’ was running into problems and scientists became concerned about the future.

- A point had been reached beyond which crop yields could not be increased any further, and there was a limit to the water supply, topsoil and phosphates for fertilizers.

- A survey carried out by scientists at Stanford University (California) in 1996 found that the amount of farmland available was dwindling because of industrialization, the spread of cities and soil erosion. They calculated that the number of mouths to feed in the USA would double by 2050.

There seemed no way in which food production could be doubled from less land. In 1996, on average there were 1.8 acres of cropland to each American and the US diet was made up of 31 per cent animal products. By 2050 there was likely to be only 0.6 of an acre per head. The Stanford scientists came to the conclusion that the solution was for people everywhere to eat less meat; it was suggested that by 2050 the US diet would probably be about 85 per cent vegetarian. Matters were made worse in parts of Africa (Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and Somalia) during the 1980s and 1990s by drought and civil wars, which played a part in causing severe food shortages and tens of thousands of deaths from starvation.

(d) Resource shortages in the Third World

Third World governments were forced to spend their valuable cash to feed, house, and educate their growing populations. But this used up resources which they would have preferred to spend on industrializing and modernizing their countries, and so their economic development was delayed. The general shortage of resources meant that the poorest countries also lacked sufficient cash to spend on healthcare. Following a meningitis epidemic in the African state of Niger, Save the Children reported (April 1996) that one-sixth of the world's population – over 800 million people – had no access to healthcare. Health systems in many poorer countries were collapsing, and the situation was becoming worse because richer countries were reducing aid. The report estimated that it cost at least $12 a person a year to provide basic healthcare; but 16 African countries (including Niger, Uganda, Zaire, Tanzania, Mozambique and Liberia) plus Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Vietnam were spending much less than that. In comparison, Britain was spending the equivalent of $1039 (£723). In fact Zaire was spending only 40c per head a year, while Tanzania managed 70c. This meant that simple immunization against easily preventable diseases was not being carried out in these countries. Widespread epidemics could be expected before the end of the century, and a rise in the child mortality rate. When the AIDS epidemic spread, around the turn of the century, it was clear that Africa in particular would be in dire crisis. Another disturbing fact was that almost all these states were spending vastly more per head on defence than on healthcare.

28.3 ATTEMPTS AT POPULATION CONTROL

For many years people had been giving serious thought to the question of controlling the population before the world became too overcrowded and impossible to live in. Soon after the First World War, scientists in a number of countries first began to be concerned at the population growth and felt that it was a problem that should be studied at international level. The first *World Population Congress* was held in Geneva in 1925, and the following year an *International Union for the Scientific Study of Population* was set up in Paris. As well as scientists, the organization also included statisticians and social scientists who were concerned about the probable economic and social effects if the world's population continued to grow. They did valuable work collecting statistics and encouraging governments to improve their data systems, so that accurate information about population trends could be collected.

(a) The United Nations Population Commission

When the United Nations Organization was set up in 1945, a Population Commission was included among its many agencies. When the Third World population began to 'explode' during the 1950s, it was the UN which took the lead in encouraging governments to introduce birth-control programmes. India and Pakistan set up family-planning clinics to advise people about the various methods of birth control available, and to provide them with cheap contraceptives. Huge publicity campaigns were launched with government posters recommending a maximum of three children per family. Many African governments recommended a maximum of three children, while the Chinese government went further and fixed the legal maximum at two children per family. But progress was very slow: ancient practices and attitudes were difficult to change, especially in countries like India and Pakistan. In the Roman Catholic countries of South America, the Church continued to forbid artificial birth control.

(b) How successful were the campaigns?

The best that can be said is that in parts of Asia the population growth rate was beginning to fall slightly during the 1980s; but in many African and Latin American countries, it was still rising. Table 28.2 shows what could be achieved with the spread of birth control.

Table 28.3 shows the 1986 populations and growth rates of various regions, compared with the 1950–9 growth rates. The most rapid growth rate in 1986 was in Africa, where some countries had rates of over 3 per cent per year. The table also reveals how serious the problem of overcrowding was in some areas where there were on average over a hundred people to every square kilometre. This was not so serious in the developed nations of Europe, which had the prosperity and resources to support their populations; but in the poorer nations of Asia, it meant grinding poverty. Bangladesh was probably the world's most crowded country with an average of 700 people to every square kilometre. The population growth rates of Bangladesh and Britain provide a startling comparison: at the present growth rates, Bangladesh will double its population of 125 million in less than 30 years, but Britain's population of 58.6 million will take 385 years to double in size. The Population Institute predicted (December 1995) that, with effective birth control, the global population could stabilize by 2015 at about 8 billion. However, without effective promotion of family planning, the total could well have reached 14 billion by 2050. With the population of Europe and North America growing so slowly, it meant that an ever-increasing proportion of the world's population would be poor.

Table 28.2 **Use of contraceptives and the birth rate**

	% of married women using contraceptives, 1986	*Fall in the % birth-rate, 1978–86*
India	35	4.5 > 3.2
China	74	3.2 > 2.1
Colombia (S. America)	65	4.3 > 2.6
South Korea	70	3.5 > 1.6
Kenya	Under 20	4.6 constant
Pakistan	Under 20	4.6 constant

Table 28.3 **Population growth rates and density**

	1986 population (millions)	*% growth rate 1950–9 (annual)*	*% growth rate 1980–5 (annual)*	*1986 population density per sq km*
N. America	266	1.75	0.9	12
Europe	493	0.75	0.3	100
USSR	281	1.4	1.0	13
Oceania	25	2.4	1.5	3
Africa	572	1.9	2.9	19
Latin America	414	2.4	2.3	20
E. Asia	1264	1.5	1.2	105
S. Asia	1601	2.2	2.2	101
World total	4916	1.7	1.5	36

On the other hand, some historians feel that the fears about the population explosion have been exaggerated. Paul Johnson, for example, believes that there is no need to panic; once Asia, Latin America and Africa become more successfully industrialized, living standards will rise, and this economic betterment, along with more effective use of contraception, will slow down the birth rate. According to Johnson, the example of China is most encouraging: 'The most important news during the 1980s, perhaps, was that the population of China appeared virtually to have stabilised.'

However, the case of China raises another issue: how far should a government go in its efforts to control population? In 1978 a group of scientists calculated that unless Chinese women were limited to one child each, China would face disaster – the country's resources would simply not be sufficient to feed the population. Conversely, if the one woman one-child limit could be achieved, then the Chinese would become prosperous and assume their rightful place among the world's leading nations. In 1980 the government duly announced the one-child policy. Historian Matthew Connelly describes what happened next:

> This was the most coercive phase in the whole history of China's one-child policy. … All women with one child were to be inserted with a stainless steel, tamper-resistant IUD [intra-uterine device], all parents with two or more children were to be sterilized, and all unauthorized pregnancies terminated. There was not even a pro forma injunction to avoid coercion. … In 1983 more than 16 million women and more than 4 million men were sterilized in China, nearly 18 million women were inserted with IUDs, and over 14 million underwent abortions.

There was widespread criticism of this policy in China itself. The All-China Women's Federation demanded an end to 'infanticide and the abuse of women'. There was outrage among Roman Catholics and pro-life supporters around the world, especially in the USA. Eventually the Chinese government softened the policy, but claimed that it had been successful, and was therefore justified. Now that China's population has stabilized and the birth rate is even falling, this means that there are fewer people to share the available resources; therefore standards of living should rise and poverty should be reduced. However, some observers point out that although this in itself is a great achievement, it

does not solve the problems facing the ecosystem. Matthew Connelly explains why, using as an example some Asian countries which adopted population control policies:

> If Asians have only 2.1 children, but also air conditioning and automobiles, they will have a greater impact on the global ecosystem than a billion more subsistence farmers … [because] they tend to consume more of everything per capita, whether fuel, or water, or wide open spaces.

This was borne out in a joint report by a group of scientists from 105 institutions published shortly before the Earth Summit Conference of July 2012. This confirmed that one of the main causes of the rapid rise in consumption was 'the growing middle class in developed countries and the very lavish lifestyles of the very rich across the planet'. American biologist Paul Ehrlich put it this way: 'The current redistribution of wealth from poor to rich must be halted, and overconsumption by the rich must be controlled with programs such as those that transformed consumption patterns in the United States when it entered World War II.' Former World Bank economist Aklog Birara suggested that

> the world can no longer afford to follow the same economic and social model of insatiable demand and concentration of consumption and wealth in a few hands. I cannot imagine that the rest of the world would tolerate continuation of 20 per cent of humanity consuming 80 per cent of the world's goods and services, while one-fifth of the poorest consume only 1.3 per cent. Is this not what triggered the Arab Spring and is likely to trigger Springs in the rest of the poorest and most repressed countries?

This last point was taken up by Paul Liotta and James Miskel, who highlight another worrying aspect of the still growing population; the growth of huge cities with populations of over 10 million. They calculate that by 2025 there will be at least 27 of these mega-cities around the globe. In Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America, these massive concentrations of people inevitably include a large proportion of poverty-stricken have-nots. In the authors' words: 'Crowded masses within these unaccommodating spaces will have literally nowhere else to go; if left to their own devices by inept or uncaring governments, collective rage, despair and hunger will inevitably erupt.' They argue that mega-cities are attracting terrorists and various types of criminal gangs; unless governments meet this challenge by taking effective counter-measures, some of them will present a serious security threat to the rest of the world.

As the world population reached 7 billion at the end of 2011, the majority view was still that efforts to reduce population growth in areas like Africa must not be relaxed. Greater efforts should be made to provide contraceptives to everybody in the developing world who wants them; and greater use of the internet should be made to spread information about the various methods of birth control.

28.4 THE POPULATION INCREASE AND ISLAMISM

(a) Samuel Huntington and the 'clash of civilizations'

Another aspect of population growth that many Western observers found threatening was that many of the states where the population was increasing most rapidly were Muslim. It was believed that by 2020 the total Muslim population would far outweigh the non-Muslims in the West, bearing in mind also that many Muslims actually lived in the West. It was in a 1992 lecture that the American political commentator, Samuel Huntington, first proposed the 'clash of civilizations' theory. He later elaborated the theory in his book

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996). He argued that with end of the Cold War, the clash of ideologies was also over, and that in the future, the great conflicts would be between different cultures and civilizations. The USA would be 'the primary bastion, agent, champion and defender of Western civilization' against whatever challenges presented themselves. He also pointed out that the rise of the West had depended more on military force than cultural persuasion. 'The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do.'

At the time Huntington was writing, it was becoming increasingly clear that Islamism was the main challenge to Western liberal values – stable democracy, regard for human rights, and capitalist free-market economies. The Iranian revolution of 1979, which overthrew the pro-American government of the Shah Reza Pahlevi and set up an Islamic republic, was regarded by many in the West as a dangerous manifestation of the threat from Islamic fundamentalism. Even more so when Iranian students kidnapped over 50 Americans and held them hostage for 444 days, in an attempt to force the US to hand over the former Shah who was living in exile in the USA. Then in October 1981 President Sadat of Egypt was assassinated by members of a militant Islamic group, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, because they thought he was too pro-American and he had made peace with the Israelis. Islamism came to be regarded by many in the West as synonymous with terrorism, as a whole series of attacks took place on American targets: US embassies in Beirut and Kuwait (1983 – carried out by Islamic Jihad), the US embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania – both in 1988), the destruction of the airliner over Scotland with the loss of 270 lives (1988), a bomb explosion in the World Trade Center in New York (1993), the damaging of the destroyer *Cole* in harbour in Yemen (2000) and the following year the climax of 9/11 with the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York. Many Americans condemned Islam as a whole, calling Muslims 'a colossal threat' and 'a failed faith and civilization', and claiming that Muslims everywhere 'lack the liberal gene'. As President Bush launched his 'war against terrorism' with the attack on Afghanistan, announcing that countries were 'either with us or against us', it looked as though Huntington's predictions were about to become reality.

However, Raymond Baker argues that such blanket condemnations of Islam ignore some of the most influential Islamic thinkers of the last half-century, who have put forward a vision of Islam that champions 'rationality, science, education, tolerance, social justice, democracy and political participation. In Turkey, for example, democracy has worked successfully and Islamists have done well in elections. Compared with other parties, "they are perceived by the population to be greatly supportive of local communities".' In Palestine, the militant Hamas Party won the election fairly in 2006; but the USA, claiming to be committed to democracy, was most reluctant to accept the voters' verdict. Certainly many respected Muslim writers had already rejected the 'clash of civilizations' theory. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, a professor of law in Atlanta, USA, and formerly of the University of Khartoum (Sudan), argued that 'all the governments of predominantly Islamic countries have clearly and consistently acted in consideration of their own economic, political or security interests. What is happening everywhere is simply the politics of power, as usual, not the manifestation of a clash of civilizations.' During the 1990s the UN and NATO actually supported Muslims in Kosovo and Bosnia, as well as in Somalia and Chechnya. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the USA, some Muslim states sided with the Americans and offered their support. Pakistan provided vital help, and its president, Pervez Musharraf, condemned Pakistani extremists for bringing Islam into disrepute. Thus Pakistan received considerable financial aid from the USA in return for its co-operation, as did Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Another Muslim, Ziauddin Sardar, wrote (*Observer,* 16 September 2001) that 'Islam cannot explain the

actions of the suicide hijackers, just as Christianity cannot explain the gas chambers, or Catholicism the bombing at Omagh. They are acts beyond belief by people who long ago abandoned the path of Islam.' He insisted that terrorist actions were completely alien to the faith and reasoning of Islam; it was a war against a small group of Muslim terrorists [al-Qaeda] and the rogue states that were harbouring them.

Other writers have made the point that Islamism, like Christianity, is far from being a united entity. There are at least three major divisions of Islam and many subdivisions and groups. Paul Berman (in *Terror and Liberalism*, 2004 edition), an American political and cultural critic, argues that distinct cultural boundaries do not exist – there is no 'Islamic civilization', nor a 'Western civilization', and that the evidence for a civilization clash is therefore not convincing. Edward Said pointed out that the Islamic world numbers over a billion people, includes dozens of countries, societies, traditions, languages and, of course, an infinite number of different experiences. It is therefore simply false to treat them all as a monolithic entity called Islamists, who are inherently violent, who are anti-modern and anti-liberal, who do not believe in democracy and who want to turn the clock back to the seventh century, when Islam began. Noam Chomsky has dismissed the whole theory as being merely a new justification for the USA 'for any atrocities that they wanted to carry out'. The USA needed a new threat on which to lay the blame for their interventionist policies, now that the Soviet Union was no longer a viable threat. And indeed one example of this: the invasion of Iraq was blamed on al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's non-existent weapons of mass destruction, when in fact the real reason for the attack was to enable the USA to protect their oil supplies.

(b) Islamism and its beliefs and principles

Founded by the Prophet Mohammed (570–632) in Mecca, Islam (meaning 'submission', because Muslims submit themselves to the will of God) soon spread throughout Arabia. At its furthest extent it reached across North Africa and into Southern Spain, Malaya, Indonesia, Turkey and eastern Europe, following the capture of Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1453. Mohammed claimed to have received messages from the angel Gabriel, which were written down by his followers, and formed the Muslim holy book, the Koran. This contains the Five Pillars of Islam, the five basic obligatory acts: saying the creed, daily prayers, giving alms for the poor, fasting during Ramadan and making the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once. In addition, Muslims must follow Islamic law, which deals with virtually every aspect of life and society.

As with Christianity, there are several different denominations:

- **Sunni:** these are the largest denomination, making up over 80 per cent of all Muslims. There are several divisions within the Sunnis, some moderate and peaceful, others more extreme, such as Salafi and Jihadists (who believe in a holy war).
- **Shia:** they are the second largest group, making up more than 10 per cent of the total. They share many of the core beliefs and practises of Islam with Sunnis; but the main division occurred over the question of who was the true successor to Mohammed himself. Sunnis believe that Mohammed did not appoint a successor, and that God's choice for the next leader would be shown through an election. Shias, on the other hand, believe that Mohammed appointed his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and that therefore he was the first Imam (leader). This means that the Caliphs elected after Mohammed's death are not regarded as legitimate leaders by Shias. Sunnis and Shias also disagree on which hadiths (reports about Mohammed's words and actions) are the most important. To complicate matters further, Shias themselves

have several divisions, including Zaidis, Alawites, Twelvers and Druze. In Iraq Shia are the majority group; after the war in 2003, the militant Sunnis launched an uprising against both the Shia and the foreign occupiers.

- **Sufis:** Sufism is a branch of Islam that focuses on the more spiritual aspects of religion. It began as a reaction against the wealthy lifestyles of many leading Muslims. Sufis tried to lead simple and austere lives of service to others, aiming for spiritual perfection and a direct experience of God.

Most Islamists agree that Islam must be involved in politics. They believe that in some way governments must incorporate Muslim principles, concepts and traditions into their policies. One of their central goals is to introduce sharia (Islamic) law in countries that they control. Some believe in achieving this peacefully, but others are prepared to use violence. The West's conception of Islamism is probably skewed by the fact that the media tends to focus on violent groups such as al-Qaeda, whereas some of the most popular, dynamic and influential Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Islamic Action Front in Jordan and the Justice and Benevolence movement in Morocco, get less attention. In Morocco the media has focused on an extremist Salafi group which in May 2003 carried out horrific bombings that killed 45 people. Compared with that, Justice and Benevolence is moderate and benign.

(c) The situation in 2012

In September 2012, anti-American and anti-Western protests swept through the Muslim world following the showing on YouTube of an American film, *The Innocence of Muslims*. This was extremely insulting to the prophet Mohammed. The protests began in Libya where Islamists attacked the US consulate and killed four Americans, including the US ambassador. It emerged that the attacks had been carried out by an Islamist militia known as Ansar al-Sharia (supporters of Sharia law). As the anti-West protests, many of them violent, spread around the globe, it seemed that the world was on the brink of the long-predicted great civilizations clash.

Then events took an unexpected turn. In Libya counter-protests began to appear, demanding that the militias, which were operating outside government control, should be disbanded. The Jihadist formations Ansar al-Sharia and Abu Salem, together with several other militias, agreed to disband and hand over their weapons, claiming that they had decided their role was over. This left a number of active militias that would take time to deal with, but it was a move in the right direction. It demonstrated clearly what many writers had been arguing for the last 20 years: that the majority of Muslims are moderate and peace-loving, and those in the Third World are facing the usual problem – the struggle to feed their families. They probably have neither the time nor the inclination to take part in a struggle between rival civilizations. The terrorists represent just one strand of militant Islamic fundamentalism, which is intolerant and anti-modern. In fact, all religions have their fanatics, whose extreme beliefs often contradict the very religions they claim to embrace. Francis Fukuyama, writing in 2002, argued that the idea of the theocratic Islamic state is appealing in theory, but that the reality is less appealing:

> Those who have actually had to live under such regimes, for example, in Iran or Afghanistan, have experienced stifling dictatorships whose leaders are more clueless than most on how to overcome the problems of poverty and stagnation. … Even as the September 11th events unfolded, there were continuing demonstrations in Tehran and many other Iranian cities on the part of tens of thousands of young people fed up with the Islamic regime and wanting a more liberal political order.

This does not mean, of course, that Muslims do not have genuine grievances. The root cause that lay behind much of the terrorism was Third World poverty, human rights abuses and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor. On the one hand there was the Western capitalist system, thriving on profit-led globalization (though less so after the 2008 financial crisis) and its ruthless exploitation of the rest of the world. On the other hand there was the Third World, which saw itself as marginalized and deprived, and where all manner of problems were rife – famine, drought, AIDS, crippling debts and corrupt governments which abused human rights and failed to share the wealth of their countries among ordinary citizens. Some of these governments, such as President Mubarak's regime in Egypt, were supported by the West, because they were good at suppressing potential terrorists. The problem with the so-called 'war on terrorism' was that it had concentrated on military and police action, with not much evidence of successful aid and nation-building. In Muslim and Arab eyes, the whole situation is epitomized in the Arab–Israeli conflict. On the one hand there is Israel, wealthy, heavily armed, guilty of violating UN resolutions and supported by the USA. On the other hand there are the Palestinians, marginalized, deprived of their land, poverty-stricken and without much hope of improvement. Until these problems are addressed seriously, it is unlikely that the Muslim world and the West can ever be on close terms.

28.5 THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

(a) The beginnings

In the early 1980s, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was thought to be a disease that mainly affected homosexual men; some people called it the 'gay plague'. Another group which contracted the disease were people who used unsterilized syringes to inject themselves with drugs. At first it was in the wealthy countries of the West, particularly the USA, that most cases were reported, but after governments had launched campaigns about sexual health and the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the outbreaks seemed to have been brought under control. The widespread use of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs therapy slowed down the development of the virus and enabled people to live much longer.

It was something of a shock when, during the 1990s, the world became aware that the disease had spread to the poorest countries in the world, and that in Africa it had reached epidemic proportions. Scientists now know that it takes an average of eight to ten years for HIV infection to develop into full-blown AIDS, which was why the virus was able to spread so widely before it was recognized. The epidemic also spread to India, China and the countries of the former USSR. Tony Barnett and Alan Whiteside, in their recent book *AIDS in the twenty first Century* (2002), showed how each epidemic was different: in *China* the main causes were contaminated needles and the practice of selling blood at state-run blood collection points in the early 1990s. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that two-thirds of injections given in China were unsafe and that much of the collected blood plasma was infected. When the symptoms of AIDS began to appear, local officials tried to suppress the news. It was only in 2003 that the government admitted publicly that over a million of its citizens were HIV-positive; the infection was increasing by 30 per cent a year and 10 million could be affected by 2010. In *Russia* and *Ukraine* the highest rates were among injecting drug-users, especially those in prison. Experts calculate that once HIV enters the general population and infects around 5 per cent of adults, a general epidemic is likely to follow, as it has in southern Africa.

(b) AIDS in southern Africa

The first cases to be reported in Africa were in a fishing village in south-west Uganda, in the mid-1980s. The HIV virus spread rapidly, transmitted mainly by unprotected heterosexual sex. Governments were slow to realize the significance of what was happening and aid agencies made no provision for dealing with the disease in their assistance programmes. It was in 2001 that a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) sounded alarm bells. It said that the impact of HIV on Africa was as though it was involved in a major war. The report concentrated on Botswana, but it warned that the impact of AIDS on Africa as a whole was likely to be devastating within just a few years, if nothing was done about it. The report was not exaggerating: in 2001, 3 million people died from the disease in Africa, and 5 million became infected. By 2003 it was estimated that 29.4 million people were living with HIV or AIDS in Africa, and this was about 70 per cent of the global total. A further 3 million people died from the virus in Africa during 2003.

By that year HIV prevalence levels had risen to horrifying proportions. In Botswana and Swaziland, almost 40 per cent of adults were living with the virus or with full-blown AIDS, and the percentage was almost as high in Zimbabwe. In South Africa the prevalence level was 25 per cent. Life expectancy in southern Africa, which had reached the sixties by 1990, had fallen again to the lower forties; in Zimbabwe it was down to 33. One of the tragic side effects of the pandemic was the huge numbers of children left without parents. In Uganda there were over a million orphans; the WHO estimated that by 2010 there were likely to be 20 million AIDS orphans in Africa. There were economic effects too: a substantial proportion of the labour force was being lost, with all its skills and experience. This was being felt especially in farming and food production, while the deaths of so many young women was an irreplaceable loss to the domestic economy and to child-rearing. At the same time, there was an increased demand for people to nurse the sick and care for orphaned children.

1 Why was the epidemic so much worse in southern Africa?

HIV was able to spread more quickly in conditions of poverty, where there was very little access to information and education about the virus and how to prevent it spreading. Widespread hunger reduced resistance to the disease and accelerated the progress from HIV to AIDS. Nor were any of the expensive anti-retroviral drugs available for Africans. The large number of civil wars in Africa produced thousands of refugees, who were often cut off from their normal healthcare services. In emergency situations like these, there was a greater danger of the HIV virus being spread through contaminated blood. Most African governments took a long time to acknowledge what was happening, partly because of the stigma attached to the disease: the belief that it was caused by homosexual sex and the general reluctance to discuss sexual habits. South Africa itself was one of the slowest to take action, mainly because President Mbeki refused to accept the link between HIV and AIDS.

(c) What is being done to combat AIDS?

The experts know what needs to be done to bring the AIDS epidemic under control: people must be persuaded to have safe sex and use condoms; and somehow governments must be able to provide cheap ARV treatment. Brazil is one country where the campaign has slowed down the spread of the disease. In Africa, governments have concentrated on the so-called ‘ABC’ message: ‘Abstain from sex. Be faithful to one partner, and if you cannot, use a Condom.’ Uganda provides the great African success story; the government

admitted to the WHO in 1986 that they had some AIDS cases, and President Museveni personally took charge of the campaign, travelling round from village to village to talk about the problem and what should be done. Uganda was the first country in Africa to launch the ABC campaign and provide cheap condoms for its people. People were encouraged to come forward voluntarily for testing. The programme was financed jointly by the government, by aid agencies and by religious organizations and churches. Uganda's meagre resources were strained to the limits, but the campaign worked, even though very few people had access to ARV drugs: Uganda's HIV prevalence rate had peaked at 20 per cent in 1991, but by the end of 2003 it had fallen to about 5 per cent. The epidemic had passed its acute stage, but the problem of orphaned children was just reaching its height.

Elsewhere in Africa and China, governments were slow off the mark and the epidemic took a firmer hold, reaching crisis proportions in 2003. Some African countries were beginning to follow Uganda's example. In Malawi, President Muluzi set up an AIDS commission and appointed a special minister to deal with the problem. But huge sums of money are needed to finance the necessary three-pronged attack on HIV/AIDS across Southern Africa:

- ABC campaigns or some equivalent;
- anti-retroviral drugs – these are much cheaper now, since pharmaceutical companies gave way to political pressure and allowed drugs to be supplied more cheaply to poorer countries;
- healthcare systems and infrastructures, which in most poor states need modernizing in order to cope with the magnitude of the problem; more doctors and nurses are required.

There are several international agencies trying to deal with the disease, the most important being the UN's Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria; the World Health Organization (WHO); and UNAIDS. In December 2003, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan complained that he was 'angry, distressed and helpless'; 1 December was World AIDS Day, but the outlook was bleak. Reports from all over the Third World showed that the war against the disease was being lost; the virus was still spreading and 40 million people were living with HIV. The UN Fund said it would need £7 billion by 2005 and the WHO wanted £4 billion. Many wealthy countries have given generously; the USA, for example, has promised $15 billion over the next five years, but insists that the money be spent in the way it specifies. The Bush administration favoured programmes which promoted abstinence against those that advocated the use of condoms. The Roman Catholic Church also continues to oppose the use of condoms, even though scientists have shown that it is the best means of prevention available. No wonder Kofi Annan was angry; 'I am not winning the war', he said, 'because I don't think the leaders of the world are engaged enough.'

By 2012 well over 30 million people had died from AIDS since the first cases were identified in 1981. An estimated 1.8 million of them died in 2010 alone, two-thirds of them in southern Africa, where nearly 15 million children were left orphaned. In the same year around 2.7 million people became infected with HIV. According to the WHO, the attempts to control the epidemic have been intensified; from 2002–8 spending on the campaign in low- and middle-income countries increased sixfold. Since 2008 spending has not increased, but at least the level has been maintained. In May 2012 the WHO published a plan of priority action for the next two years: focusing on HIV prevention, encouraging people who might be at risk to get themselves tested regularly, providing even wider access to cheap ARV drugs and improving and modernizing healthcare systems, especially in southern Africa. There were some encouraging signs: more people than ever before were receiving ARV treatment, the annual number of AIDS deaths had declined and the global percentage of people infected with HIV seemed to have stabilized. However,

the UN agencies warn that recent achievements should not lead to complacency; on no account should efforts be relaxed. In fact in eastern Europe, infection rates were still rising; and in the USA in June 2012 more than one million people were living with HIV, but probably 20 per cent of them didn't know they were infected.

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